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THE TIMES 40P

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Murder of Britons shatters dream isle

FROM ADRIAN LEE IN ATHENS AND MICHAEL HORSNELL

A COUPLE who left Britain only five months ago for a dream retirement on the peaceful Greek island of Cephalonia have been found murdered in their villa.

Roy Eccles, 55, an electrical engineer from St Neots, Cambridgeshire, and his wife Judith, 49, an accountant, were found with multiple knife wounds by a worried English neighbour late on Thursday night when they had to answer their telephone on the Ionian island, the setting for Louis de Bernières' bestselling novel *Captain Correlli's Adolin*. The motive was probably burglary, although some items of jewellery were left behind.

Detectives from Athens flew to the village of Kaminarata, near the island's second town of Lixouri, where the couple lived in a small villa overlooking the hills, to take over the investigation.

Early inquiries have cast suspicion on illegal immigrants from Albania. The killer or killers fled the scene in the couple's vehicle and abandoned it 15 miles away in the port of Sami, where a ferry service runs to the mainland city of Patra.

Entry to the Eccles home had been gained through a balcony door. Police found the normally tidy villa in disarray. The bodies of the couple were in the bedroom. There was also blood on the balcony.

The alarm was raised by a neighbour, Richard Coward, 52, from Luton, Bedfordshire, who called at the villa when he became concerned that the couple were not answering their phone. At his home, a woman said: "Mr Coward was a very close friend and he is deeply shocked."

When news of the murder was broken to Hubert Wooding, Mrs Eccles' father, he collapsed and was taken to hospital. Last night Mrs Eccles' brother and his wife were believed to be travelling to Cephalonia.

The couple sold their £100,000 home in St Neots and left in October to live in the one-bedroom villa. Sue Bateman, 53, a close friend, said: "They wanted a simple life away from the stresses and strains. Roy was fed up with working and when he was offered early retirement, he took it gladly. It had always been his dream to move to the island. Judith was a little hesitant at first about 'living in a different culture, but she soon came round to the idea. They had no children and few relatives so

there was nothing stopping them from living their dream."

The couple lived near four other English families on the edge of the village. A nearby abandoned house was being examined by police in case it had been used as cover before the intruders burst in.

A police spokesman said: "It looks like the house has been searched but not everything valuable is missing. There are jewels and watches. They didn't take everything. We are not certain what the motive was. Burglary is possible. We are looking at other possibilities."

One possibility is a drugs link. Drug gangs are known to operate between the Greek islands and the mainland, using speedboats.

However, the main suspects are Albanians. Illegal immigrants and bandits from Albania are frequently the first suspects when violent crimes are committed in the region.

"Of course, sometimes the Albanians are blamed for something they did not do, but eight times out of ten, it is right," one police source said.

Until recently Greece was considered one of Europe's safest countries for crime. The flood of Albanians leaving the unrest in their homeland has been a problem for all Albania's neighbours. Albanians have been responsible for robberies, piracy and thefts on a number of Greek islands. Cephalonia is 90 miles to the south of Albania.

Earlier this week the Public Order Ministry in Athens, which is responsible for policing, ordered a crackdown against Albanian and Romanian gangs.

Nick Sklavounakis, owner of a holiday apartment block on Cephalonia, said: "The murders have come as a great shock to everyone. We have lots of British people who come out year after year. They like Cephalonia because it is a quiet place. We hardly get any crime. There must be 100 or more Britons who have decided to live here. We welcome them."

David Watrous, managing director of the Greek Islands Club, which specialises in property, said: "Cephalonia is a very peaceful island. It is not like a lot of over-commercialised resorts, but up-market with private villas. It's a place for people who want to escape from the rougher elements of tourism. People leave their doors and windows open."

Greek tragedy, page 3



Emma Thompson arriving for the premiere in Los Angeles of *Primary Colors*, the film based on the 1992 US presidential campaign. She was wearing a charm bracelet made for her in California. Page 13

Outrage at British Embassy invitation to Adams

By PHILIP WEBSTER AND TOM RHODES

TONY BLAIR last night backed a decision by Britain's Ambassador in Washington to invite Gerry Adams to a "star-studded" lunch at the British Embassy on the eve of St Patrick's Day next week.

The move was attacked as regrettable by the Conservatives, but Downing Street said it entirely agreed with Sir Christopher Meyer's decision. It was in keeping with the approach that all parties in the peace process should be treated equally.

The Embassy, which for years tried to keep Mr Adams out of America, has invited him to join Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, David Trimble and John Taylor from the Ulster Unionist Party and Pat Hume, the wife of John Hume, the SDLP leader, at lunch in the glittering ballroom of the Lutyns residence on Massachusetts Avenue. There Mr Adams and other guests are to be fed shrimp and salmon terrine, Beef Wellington and chocolate hazelnut cake.

Downing Street pointed out that President Clinton had invited representatives of all parties to the White House for a similar event. But Andrew MacKay, the Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, said it was a regrettable invitation. "I have already expressed concerns that the Prime Minister entertained Sinn Fein leaders in Downing Street on Thursday. What message will this lunch invitation give to the people of America when it is known that Sinn Fein IRA are

Continued on page 2, col 7

The Times up, Telegraph down - again

The Times sold more copies than ever in the past twelve months, reaching an average circulation of 833,242 copies a day last month, according to the Independent Audit Bureau of Circulation. This is a percentage increase of 5.65, or 43,423 copies, over February of last year.

The average daily sale in the six months from September to February, at 812,646, is a record sale for The Times in any similar period.

By comparison, The Daily Telegraph recorded a loss of 4.39 per cent during the same period - a reduction of 49,157 copies a day year on year.

These latest figures show that The Times is fast closing the gap on The Telegraph. Over the past year the sales gap has been cut by 92,590 copies, reducing the difference between the two market leaders in each of the past six consecutive months to fewer than 300,000 copies a day.

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Record in Test

Mark Ramprakash, with his maiden Test century, and Graham Thorpe, set a sixth-wicket record partnership of 65 before England were all out for 403 in the fifth Test. Pages 33, 34

Word of century

It surfaced in 1904, has been both celebrated and reviled and has now been chosen as the word which best sums up a century. Page 7

Top The Times overseas prices: France £110, Italy £100, Belgium £110, Spain £100, Portugal £100, Germany £110, Austria £110, Switzerland £110, Denmark £110, Finland £110, Greece £110, Ireland £110, Norway £110, Sweden £110, USA \$130.

Israeli threat to snub Cook in row over settlement visit

By CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM AND MICHAEL BINYON

SENIOR Israeli officials last night gave a warning that if Robin Cook visits the site of a controversial Jewish settlement with a senior Palestinian next week as he intends, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, might refuse to see him.

The Foreign Secretary stirred a political storm in Israel with the announcement that during his one-day visit to the occupied territories on Tuesday he intends to go to Har Homa, the East Jerusalem site whose expansion last year led to the breakdown in the peace process.

"We think this is a step backwards," a senior Israeli said. Israel would lobby hard before Mr Cook begins his four-day Middle East trip to get him to change the itinerary. If he refused, a planned meeting with Mr Netanyahu

would probably be cancelled. The Israeli Ambassador in London yesterday delivered a formal protest.

However, the Foreign Office said Mr Cook did not intend to alter his schedule. The Foreign Secretary will be carrying a six-point European Union peace plan which includes a request to Israel to cease expanding settlements, whose population is to increase by about 9 per cent this year.

Mr Cook said expansion was "plainly in breach of the Oslo accords" and provided "provocation to the people in the Palestinian Authority".

Right-wing Jews threatened anti-British demonstrations and officials insisted there was no chance of Israel bowing to British and EU demands to halt settlement building.

"We are not pleased at all with this supposedly symbolic

gesture by Mr Cook," a senior Israeli source said. "We are well aware that it is intended to send us a message - but Israel does not react to messages like that."

Israel regards Har Homa, land annexed after the 1967 war, as part of its "united and eternal capital" and not subject to further negotiation.

A British diplomat said: "Our policy on settlements is [that] beyond the Green Line they are illegal. The Green Line in the eyes of Britain and most UN members is the pre-1967 border between Israel and the West Bank, including east Jerusalem."

A bomb exploded in east Jerusalem near the Damascus Gate yesterday, wounding four Palestinians. In Hebron and Nablus, Palestinian mobs clashed with Israeli troops for the fourth consecutive day.

Court win for small wheel in the City

By CAROL MIDDLETON

A CITY of London businessman was celebrating yesterday after winning a court battle for his right to Rollerblade.

Myles King, 32, skated away from the Old Bailey grinning after a judge overturned his conviction for using a wheel illegally.

He had been fined £50 with



£100 costs by magistrates after being convicted of breaking the 1839 City of London Police Act by skating on the pavement. The Act says wheels must not be rolled on the footway. But Mr Graham Boal, QC, allowed his appeal, declaring that the authorities must make a specific offence of "furiously Rollerblading" if people were to be successfully prosecuted.

Mr King, who skates to work in a bank each day, had been confronted by a policeman near Liverpool Street station last month. The distance Mr King travelled on the footway was measured at 44 yards by a laser machine, the court heard. "He had four wheels on each boot and one boot on each foot," said a witness.

Mr King, from Bermondsey, said: "I've never bumped into anyone or been a hazard."

Esquire

"Let's say I committed this crime. It would have to have been because I loved her, right?" **OJ Simpson Esq**

"I am amazed by the mess that Hollywood has made of its star system." **Quentin Tarantino Esq**

"With every fibre in my body I wanted to be George Best. He was God." **Bob Mills Esq**

"I had a knack of riding with the punches. I took all the power out of the punch. It's like catching a hard ball." **Jake La Motta Esq**

Esquire

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Middle class to foot bill for Budget reforms

By NICHOLAS WOOD AND PHILIP WEBSTER

Chancellor makes getting jobless into work his priority — and will put up taxes to pay for it

GORDON BROWN will disappoint the middle classes in his Budget on Tuesday as he unveils the biggest shake-up of the tax and benefits system for many years. The Chancellor will make the poor his priority with a battery of measures intended to make work pay. Welfare-to-work plans will form the centrepiece of the Budget. "There will be little in this for the middle classes but they will be relieved to see us tackling welfare dependency."

a Treasury insider said. The country will face sharply higher duties on petrol and cigarettes, abolition or a further 5 per cent reduction of mortgage interest tax relief — costing homeowners up to £20 a month — bigger taxes on company cars and a crackdown on tax avoidance. Even many of the gains from a likely 10p tax rate on the first £1,000-£2,000 of taxable income will probably be clawed back from the better-off in the 40 per cent tax

bracket on more than £26,100 a year. Introduction of the 10p rate could be delayed to give the Inland Revenue more time to make it work. Instead, Mr Brown will declare war on poverty, with measures designed to make it worthwhile for the unemployed to take a job and for the low paid to move up the ladder. Women and children will be among the chief beneficiaries of his proposals. One ray of light for the better-off will be the expected

climdown over Mr Brown's plan to impose a £50,000 tax-free limit on individual savings accounts (Isas), which could hit existing Tessa and Pip holders. The 300,000 or so people who have already built up savings over that limit will be told that they are not to be taxed retrospectively. There will be a ceiling on the new accounts — either a figure close to the £50,000 figure or a ten-year limit favoured by the savings industry. In an attempt to boost jobs,

National Insurance Contributions (Nics) for firms employing low-paid workers will be cut, working mothers on low wages will be given extra help with childcare and hard-up breadwinners will benefit from a new Working Families Tax Credit. The credit will top up the incomes of people on low wages. Run by the Inland Revenue, it will be more generous than the scheme it replaces — family credit — which is paid to families and lone parents earning less than

£7 a week. Benefits will be withdrawn more slowly, as people move up the wages ladder. Mr Brown's proposals will come into full effect from April with the nationwide launch of the £3.5 billion New Deal programme, subsidising work for the long-term jobless. They will be underpinned by the introduction of a national minimum wage around £3.50 an hour from next year. To help to pay for the reforms a gallon of petrol will

rise by 2p — 6 per cent above inflation — and the price of 20 cigarettes will increase by more than 20p a packet. Sources admitted that after the giveaways of the Thatcher years, the middle classes would find little comfort in the Budget. But the Chancellor believes the middle classes will receive an indirect dividend in the proposals for the unemployed. "For years they have resented these people as scroungers. At last they will see a government getting them into a job," an aide said. **Brown's squad, page 20**

IN BRIEF



Kate Alderson

Banks in sports call to young

Tony Banks, the Minister for Sport, spoke last night of the importance of encouraging young people to participate in sporting activities. He was addressing a mayoral dinner in Sedgfield, Tony Blair's constituency, which was being held to raise funds for a prize to be awarded annually to a teenager from the village in Co Durham who has shown distinction in the arts. The award is to be made in memory of the *Times* journalist Kate Alderson, who died in a road accident in 1996. Ms Alderson's family are close friends of the Mayor of Sedgfield, Rita Taylor.

£1 billion BSE

The first year of the BSE crisis cost the British economy nearly £1 billion, and a net loss of 1,000 jobs, a report commissioned by the previous Government from DTZ Pieda Consulting estimates. The figure is much less severe than predicted, mainly because of the effect of subsidies and compensation.

Pharmacy stays

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society has decided not to press charges against artist Damien Hirst for flouting the law by naming his new restaurant "Pharmacy". It said there was no penalty that was likely to deter Mr Hirst from using the name for the restaurant in Notting Hill, West London.

Auditors clear Prescotts over housing deal

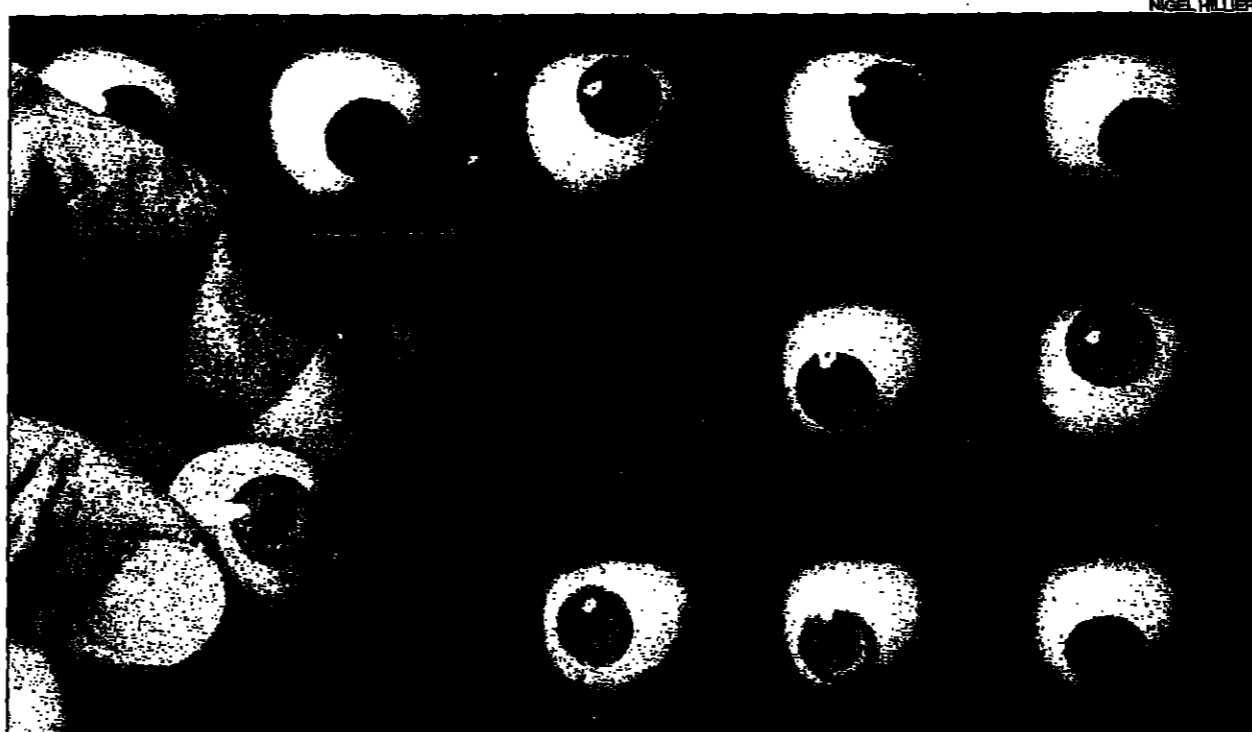
By NICHOLAS WATT AND DOMINIC KENNEDY

JOHN PRESCOTT and his eldest son were yesterday cleared of any impropriety in the purchase of 20 former council houses at allegedly discounted prices in their home city, Hull. The Deputy Prime Minister faced embarrassment over last weekend when it was disclosed that Wyke Developments, for which his son works, bought the houses from a government housing trust for an average of £5,300. Opponents of Mr Prescott in the city claimed that his son had received favourable treatment because the houses were worth £20,000 each. Auditors from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions concluded in their report on the affair that there was no

impropriety because the houses were bought at their market value. They said that the houses were sold by the Hull Action Trust to Wyke on the understanding that they would be renovated within 12 months at a cost of between £8,000 and £10,000. They would then be let out to the social housing market. The report concludes: "Nothing we saw in the papers at the HAT (Housing Action Trust) or the GO (Government Office) leads us to conclude other than that the sale was handled with full regard to the requirements of regularity and propriety." The auditors reject allegations that the deal was carried out in an underhand way and say the Deputy Prime Minister was informed of the deal only after the deal had been concluded last year. The sale of the houses had been advertised last summer in the local press and Wyke had made the best offer. One bidder had offered only £1 per property. However, the auditors criticise the housing trust for failing to carry out proper checks on the financial standing of Wyke, which is a new company. They say: "While the financial risk for the [housing trust] is small, if Wyke Developments fails then it could impede the Trust's objectives of getting these houses back into the social letting market."



MUST'VE BEEN THAT BUCKET OF WATER



Some of about 400 temporary glass eyeballs stocked at the National Artificial Eye Service in Blackpool, which is opening to the public for the first time as part of National Science Week. The week of events was launched in London yesterday by Tony Blair, who said that he had been put off science at school by dull teaching

Bingham renews debate on murder

THE Lord Chief Justice reopened a long-running dispute between judges and the executive yesterday when he urged the abolition of mandatory life sentences for murder (Frances Gibb writes). The jail terms should be decided by judges, not politicians, he said. Lord Bingham of Cornhill said that the present system — under which Home Secretaries decide killers' release dates — flew in the face of principles

of morality, justice and democratic government. Speaking at the Police Staff College in Bramshill, Hampshire, he said that his views had the overwhelming support of the Queen's Bench judges. Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, issued an immediate statement yesterday defending the present system as fitting for murder, because it was an offence that was "different from all other categories of offence".

Officer faces charge over Lawrence case

A DETECTIVE with the Metropolitan Police faces a charge of neglect of duty over his handling of the Stephen Lawrence murder inquiry (Stewart Tendler writes). The Police Complaints Authority said yesterday that the man was a middle-ranking officer. If he was found guilty by an internal disciplinary board, he could be sacked. A number of senior officers who have now retired would, according to the PCA, also have

faced charges if they were still serving. News of the possible charge was released a few days before the start of an inquiry under Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, a former High Court judge, into the death of Stephen, 18, who was stabbed at a bus stop in Eltham, South London, in 1993. The officer is the only investigator to face charges after a highly critical report by Kent police into the handling of the investigation.

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Island dream turned into Greek tragedy

Murdered couple were learning language and planning a future

By JOANNA BAILE AND MICHAEL HORSNELL

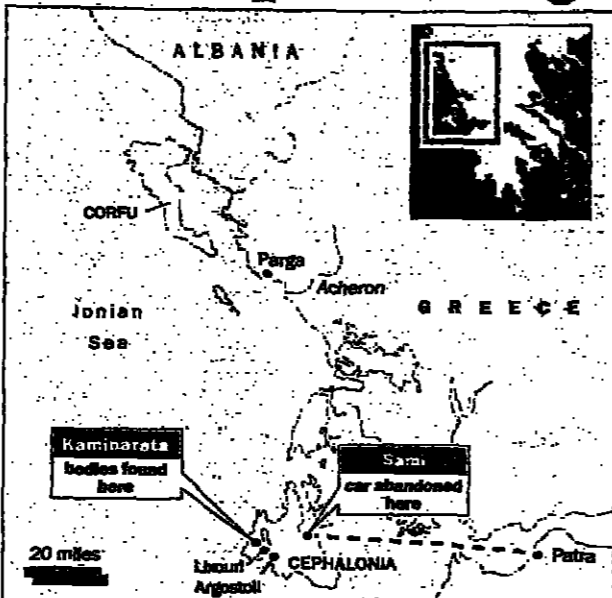
IT HAD long been Roy and Judith Eccles's dream to move to the idyllic, sun-drenched Ionian island of Cephalonia where they had spent many happy holidays.

The rugged beauty and unadorned light captivated them and when Mr Eccles was offered early retirement from his job as an electrical engineer at an airbase, the couple put their £100,000 detached house up for sale. They bought a plot of land on the island and commissioned a simple one-bedroom villa overlooking the hills on the outskirts of the small village of Kaminarata on the west coast.

For the nine months while the house was being built, they learned Greek and planned their future. Last October, they said their final farewells to their friends and neighbours in St Neots, Cambridgeshire, and flew off to begin their new life.

Sue Bateman, 53, a close friend and former neighbour, received her last letter from Mrs Eccles yesterday morning. She said her friend had written of how they were busy planting a garden, as well as taking Greek lessons from a neighbour.

They appeared to be settling in very well. They got on well with the local people,



whom they described as very friendly. They were also enjoying the company of some English friends who had moved to the island two years ago. She did not mention any problems at all. This has all come as a terrible shock. They were a lovely couple and I cannot believe that they are gone.

She described Mr and Mrs Eccles as a close couple and kindly neighbours, whom they were looking forward to visiting this year. "They were lovely, very, very nice and very

kind. In many ways they kept themselves to themselves. But they were very good neighbours, you could always count on them. Their home was their hobby - they had a beautiful home. He was very much a DIY person and she was into dried flower decorating." Another former neighbour, Mary McLoughlin, 56, who used to go to keep-fit classes with Mrs Eccles, added: "Judith hated the English winters, so she really loved the idea of living somewhere sunny. They loved everything

about Greece, the food, the culture and the way of life. It is so sad it has ended in tragedy."

She added: "I heard the reports on the radio in which they were named - I just hoped it wasn't true. Now I just can't believe it."

Mrs Eccles worked in the accounts department for the solicitors Borneo Martell and Partners in Bedford for more than 33 years. The firm said: "Everyone in our firm is extremely shocked to hear the tragic news. Only today a letter from Judith was received in this office. Judith was an excellent member of staff, a fun-loving person and was well liked by everyone. Above all she had a tremendous sense of loyalty."

"We were all very sorry when Judith retired from this firm, but we were pleased for her and Roy as they were so much looking forward to their new life. Our hearts go out to Judith's and Roy's families and their friends."

The largest of the Ionian islands, Cephalonia is 780 square kilometres in size, with a population of scarcely more than 30,000, and is renowned for its unspoiled beaches, mountains and scenery. Nature lovers visiting it can view loggerhead turtles laying their eggs on southern beaches in June. Seals can be seen on the northwest coast.



Roy and Judith Eccles in Cephalonia last September. They were captivated by the island's rugged beauty

Holiday bestseller brought tourists in search of paradise



Still a bestseller after four years

WHEN Louis de Bernières travelled to Cephalonia for a two-week holiday in 1993, the result changed his life and the island. *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, the novel inspired by his visit, has been one of the publishing sensations of the decade. Since 1994, it has sold more than 350,000 copies, and it remains on the bestseller lists.

The book centres on a romance between an Italian officer posted on the island in 1941 and the daughter of the local doctor. The captivating images did for Cephalonia what Gerald Durrell did for Corfu and Peter Mayle for Provence, although the old Cephalonia is hard to find. As the book describes, an earthquake in 1953 destroyed most of the buildings on the island. In the decades since, it has been slowly

Captain Corelli's Mandolin changed life on Cephalonia, says Philip Delves Broughton

transformed by tourism spilling over from Corfu. Then came the fame from de Bernières' book.

Writing in *The Times* last year about returning to Cephalonia for a documentary about his book, the author told how shops now refuse to let him pay for goods, how the airport baggage handler shook his hand, and hoteliers invited him to stay for free. The local museum curator said that 90 per cent of her visitors were on Corelli tours, and the president of the Hoteliers' Association said that one in five of his guests was reading the book on the

beach. The islanders had long felt jealous of their better-known neighbour, Corfu, said the author. "They feel vindicated by the sudden fame caused by *Captain Corelli*."

De Bernières, 43, is British; his name is Norman by origin. *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* was his fourth novel, and its success has enabled him to devote more time to his hobbies of carpentry and mandolin playing. His next book will be set in Turkey during the First World War. He is currently in New Zealand. His agent, Lavinia Trevor, said: "He will be appalled to hear of

such a terrible tragedy which will hurt the people of the island very badly. It is extremely sad that such a delightful place should be the backdrop for this."

The success of the book has not pleased everyone. Nicholas Cosmetatos, a winegrower, lived on the island at the time of the Axis occupation and helped with historical background for the novel. He said: "It is a crying shame what has happened here over five years. There has been a boom in very, very cheap British holidays. The beer drinkers have come."

There was also an influx of illegal immigrants from Albania: "Today I heard that there are armed Albanian gangs. It is extremely sad. Greeks do not murder each other except out of passion."



Mandolin wind of change: seafront development

Cricket chief says he won't be given out over 'sexism'

By PETER FOSTER AND JOHN GOODBODY

TIM LAMB, the cricket chief accused of sexism, bullying and discrimination by a former woman employee, said yesterday that he had the full support of Lord MacLaurin of Knebworth, the chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board.

His assurance came as Rachael Heyhoe Flint, the former captain of the women's England cricket team, questioned Mr Lamb's position after claims at an industrial tribunal that the board paid for an employee to have an abortion.

"Following the findings, one could question whether the chief executive, Tim Lamb, should remain in office," she said.

However Nick Marriner, a development executive at Lord's who made Theresa Harrild pregnant, said yesterday that he had paid the £400 for his former girlfriend to have the pregnancy terminated.

Ms Harrild, who won a sexual discrimination claim

against the board on Wednesday, said that Mr Lamb had referred to women cricketers as "dykes" and had told her that she could not be considered for promotion if she had the child. She also claimed that Cliff Barker, deputy chief executive, had made sexual advances after telling her during a visit to her home that she had been sacked.

Mr Lamb and Mr Barker have denied the allegations, which were accepted as true by the chairman of the tribunal in central London.

Mr Lamb told *The Times* yesterday that Lord MacLaurin, who is in the West Indies supporting the England Test team, had said "I shouldn't worry. He knows me well enough to be satisfied that there is no substance to these allegations."

Mr Lamb said he did not think that an independent inquiry should be carried out, although any final decision rested with Lord MacLaurin.

Rampakash joy, page 33, 34

Blair's place in history is up a dead-end street

By SIMON DE BRUKELLES

THE name of Tony Blair is to join the pantheon of the world's greatest achievers—at least on maps of South Wales.

Blair Way in Port Talbot may be only an undistinguished cul-de-sac, but it is believed to be the first street in Britain to be named after the Prime Minister. To the dismay of developers of a new estate, it has been added to a list of street names commemorating some of history's most famous figures, including Isaac Newton, Marie Curie, Alfred Nobel and Cecil Rhodes.

The decision to drop the developer's suggestion, Kipling Court, and name the street after their leader, was taken by members of the Labour-controlled local authority. Political opponents condemned the decision yesterday. Anthony Taylor, the SDP councillor for the estate, said: "It is completely out of tune with all the other place names on the Fairfield estate."

"This is Labour sycophancy at its worst. Whatever your political opinions, Tony Blair

isn't yet such a great historical figure to rank alongside the neighbouring streets. I said that if we were going to name it after a contemporary figure, then it should be the Princess of Wales. But they wanted Blair and that was that."

Steve Cooper, a director of developers Dewi Sant, said yesterday: "We have to accept the decision of the council. This is only a small case of just eight flats and one house. It's not exactly prestigious. I'm not sure the Prime Minister would like to know that Blair Way is a narrow dead-end."

Desmond Davies, deputy chairman of technical services on the Neath Port Talbot council, said yesterday: "It was done as a mark of the achievements and good work of Mr Blair so far."

A Downing Street spokesman said: "As far as we aware, this is the first street named after Mr Blair. It is a decision for the local council and the Prime Minister would not want to make a specific comment on it."

Stolen pager traps a prize idiot

By SIMON DE BRUKELLES

THE fine was £150, but for Justin Clark the real punishment for being arrested in possession of a stolen pager is the world finding out how he was caught.

The 24-year-old builder earned a place in the annals of criminal ineptitude by answering a message on the machine, which congratulating him on winning £500 in a competition. When he turned up to collect his prize, the police were waiting.

The only person more surprised than Clark was David Withers, who left the message on his missing pager, little suspecting that his criminal adversary would be fool enough to fall for it.

Mr Withers, 25, lost the pager when his Renault car was broken into outside the

warehouse he manages in Bristol. His message to the thief read: "Congratulations. You have won £500. Please ring [a mobile phone number]."

Mr Withers said: "I was fuming when I found my car had been broken into and the pager and other personal items had been stolen. I called the police and then decided to leave the message. Not long afterwards, my mobile rang, and a shady sounding voice asked about the prize."

"I told him he had won £500 in a church fête and that I had paged him because I did not want to send the money by post. He got really excited and we arranged to meet."

"The police arrested the idiot when he came to collect his prize. I could not believe



Clark arrested when he answered message

anybody would be that stupid. But obviously I came up against a total dimwit, and that is being polite."

Report Writing for the prosecution, told North Avon Magistrates' Court at Yate, near Bristol, that the car was

broken into in February. "The owner returned to see a window smashed and, among other things, this pager had gone. He then contacted British Telecom and stated it was stolen."

"He then requested that they place a message on it. As a result of this, Clark called the number and arranged to collect the prize. As he was arrested, he shouted out to a girl at the scene 'It's a set-up. I've been stitched up.'"

Clark, a father of two from Filton, Bristol, claimed in court that the pager had been left at his home by a friend. He said: "I realise I cannot get out of this one, so I have pleaded guilty."

"The pager was dropped off by a friend of mine. When the message came up, I thought I would collect the money for him."

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Groovy London? You're welcome to it

Backpackers' bible says that Cool Britannia is a glossy cover for litter and expense, reports Cath Urquhart

LONDON is dirty, expensive and a victim of its own hype, according to a new guidebook. Last night there were signs that some Londoners agree with many of the conclusions.

The new London guide is produced by Lonely Planet, which for 25 years has produced world backpackers' bibles. The same series encourages budget travellers to head to Beirut ("has lost none of its vibrancy and retains a certain charm") or polluted Jakarta ("one of Indonesia's most exciting cities").

While appreciating aspects of London, the new guide condemns the capital for being taken in by "Cool Britannia" hype. At clothing markets it is "easy to be intimidated and believe that only the most trendy fashion victims will be made welcome"; at private art galleries, you must brave "horsey accents and snooty stares"; and London prices, especially in restaurants, are "absolutely horrific".

Many of the city's most famous landmarks come in for criticism. Oxford Street has "spivvy shopfront salesmen offering dubious bargains". Piccadilly Circus is "fume-choked and pretty uninteresting" and in Berkeley Square, "nightingales might conceivably still sing, though you'd never hear them for traffic".

The guide condemns the capital's "litter-strewn streets", the last trains "timed to leave you stranded after a night out", the 11pm pub closing time and the loss of traditional pub names. "If you're after something authentic, steer clear of pubs with the words slug, lettuce, rat, carrot, firkin, newt, parrot or any combination of the above in their name."

On the Underground, "it's a happy journey which doesn't involve any unscheduled halts in tunnels or other delays", and in high summer it can turn into a "black hole". Above ground, things are little better.



Image problem: news stand at Haymarket

buses are great "if you are not in a hurry", and cycling can be a "grim business".

Lonely Planet's spokeswoman, Jennifer Cox, said: "Anybody who has been to London will recognise the truth of what we're saying. We're not being rude - we give people a realistic impression. Many people have heard the hype about Cool Britannia, but that does not give a balanced impression."

A spokeswoman for the London Tourist Board said that most Londoners were regarded as friendly by tourists, according to their research. "Not everything in this huge city is perfect, but what other city can offer such a variety of history and culture?"

London Transport admitted that the Underground needed "a great deal of investment", and that, with subsidies, it had to rely on ticket revenues. There were no litter bins on stations because of the risk of bombs. "We do our best to pick up litter. Perhaps people should consider taking their litter home."

Sally Collinson, director of the Oxford Street Association, said: "These comments do not apply to the vast majority of the street. It is also much cleaner than it used to be."

In Leicester Square yesterday, Londoners and tourists backed many of the book's findings. Perez Akhtar, 30, who works at an IT support company in the West End, said: "The Underground is overcrowded, damn expensive, the walls are dirty and there are mice everywhere. Bars, cafes and shops try to rip off the tourists, but they end up ripping off Londoners as well."

Deon Kriek, 38, from Johannesburg, on a week's holiday with his wife, said: "I haven't seen one bobby on the streets to ask for directions when I needed one. Moving about on the Underground is madness, too many people in too small a place."

But Arielle Chaukin, 13, from New York, said: "I loved Buckingham Palace. London's streets are much cleaner than New York's: in New York people spit their gum on the pavement, but you wouldn't dare do that here. The air seems much cleaner as well."

Leading article, page 23
London guides, Weekend, page 32



Image problem: a workman taking a rest from repairing the Queen Victoria monument outside Buckingham Palace yesterday

CAPITAL HIGHS AND LOWS

Selected verdicts from the Lonely Planet guide to London:

HIGHLIGHTS: National Gallery: "one of the world's finest art galleries"; Globe Theatre: "extraordinary take in a show"; Hampton Court Palace: "fine deep history... superb gardens"; St James's Park: "tower beds are sumptuous and colourful"; Kew: "Gardens... delights to offer at any time of year".

LOWLIGHTS: London Dungeon: "London's most tasteless attraction"; Rock Circus: "its popularity is 'one of London's greatest mysteries'"; Camden Market: "junky stalls... crowds and mayhem"; Barbican Centre: "a forbidding series of wind tunnels"; Leicester Square: "hard to imagine a time when artists... chose to live here".



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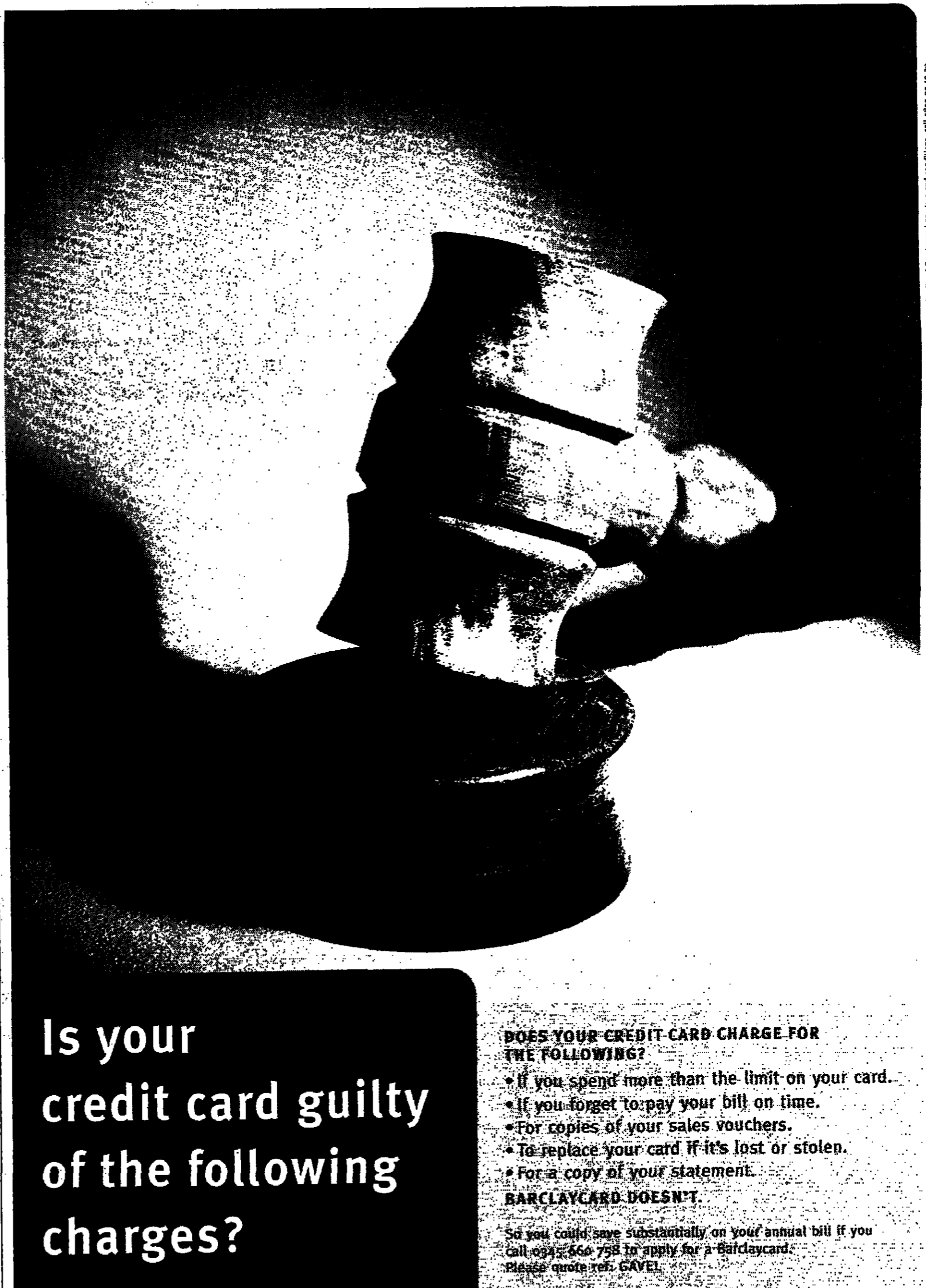
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Climbers get a Dome's-eye view



Dome workers 300ft above Greenwich. Kiernan says the best time is early morning when the mist lifts and they can see the river. Familiar landmarks like Canary Wharf "look like a Lego construction"

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Jethro Kiernan captures the views from the top that only a select few will ever see



AFTER four months of being blown about on top of Britain's most controversial landmark, workers don't hang around admiring the view. But Jethro Kiernan, above, and his workmates get a view that visitors to the Millennium Dome will never see.

Constructors were reluctant to climb the 12 steel masts that will hold the roof so they turned to mountaineers and abseilers like Mr Kiernan. "We get to swing about above London for £130 a day which pays for our expeditions to the Himalayas," said Mr Kiernan, 27, who photographed the view that Peter Mandelson has yet to see. "When we first got up here I admit we did just stand and stare."

The workers thread together the lattice of steel cables, weighing up to ten tonnes each, and knit them across the top of the Dome to hold up the roof. "The worst was the first few days because the masts swung about so much you felt seasick," Mr Kiernan said. "The great thing is you never get your boss coming up to give you a hard time."

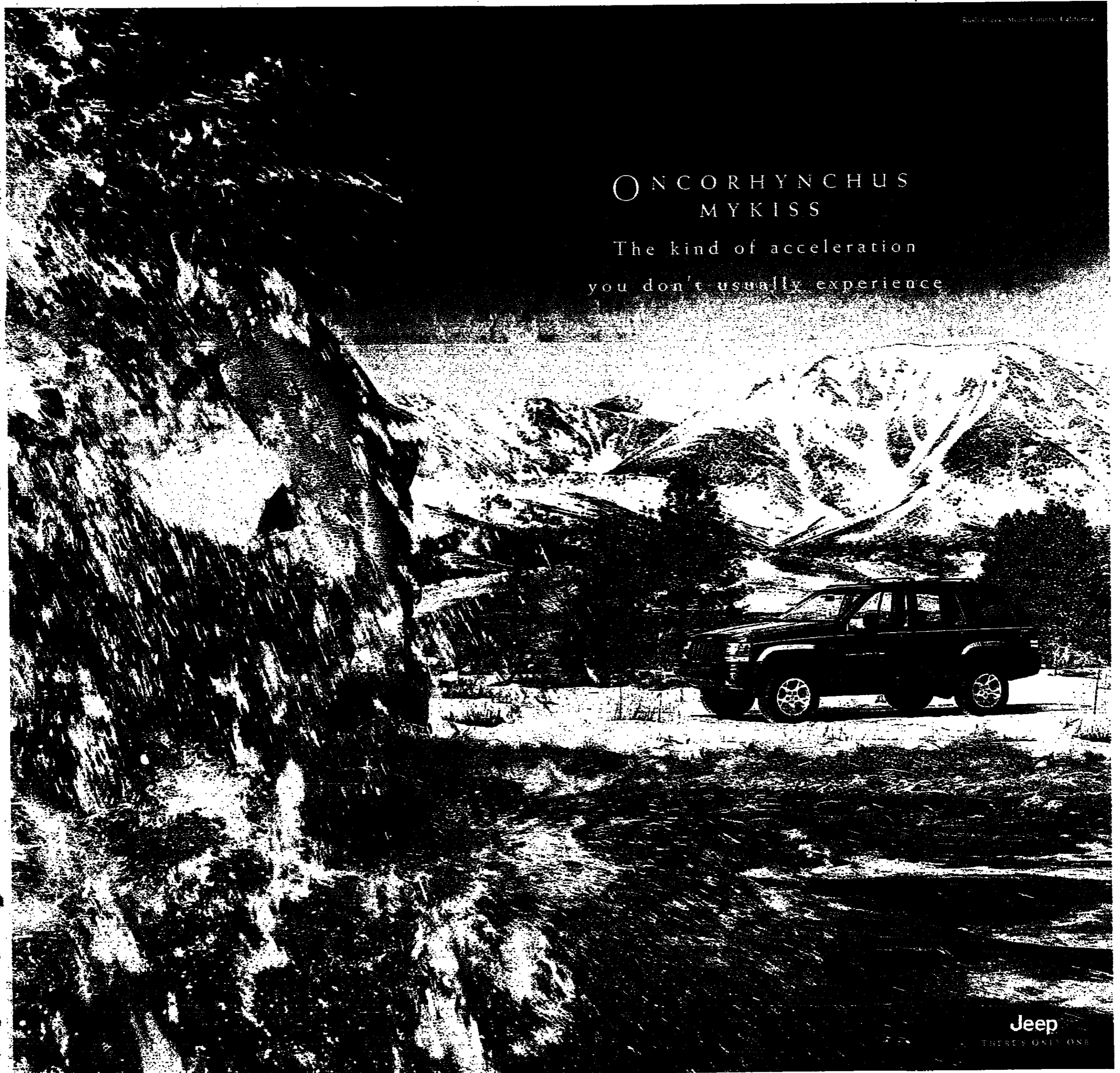


Secured by two inch-thick ropes, a Dome employee works oblivious to the view below

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NATIVE TO THE NORTH AMERICAN PACIFIC COAST, *Oncorhynchus Mykiss*, the Steelhead Trout, migrates upstream from the sea to spawn. Sometimes reaching nearly 8,000ft above sea level. The sort of altitude where you'll also come across something else in its natural habitat: the Jeep Grand Cherokee. A Grand Cherokee will take you into the wildest terrain, whilst its anti lock discs are there to stop you (literally) bumping into any grizzlies. Along with a muscular 2.5 litre turbo diesel or 4.0 litre petrol engine, the Grand Cherokee Laredo's extensive spec includes air conditioning and a powerful six-speaker stereo. But for really taking the rough with the smooth, train your binoculars on the Grand Cherokee Limited. For all its rugged ability, the 4.0 litre Limited can reach 0-60 mph in under 11 seconds. And boasts automatic climate control, ABS and a sumptuous leather interior that includes power adjustable, heated, front seats. Is there a more luxurious way to reach 8,000ft? Only if you also own a private jet. Prices for the Grand Cherokee range start at £26,495 on the road. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE.



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Chanel takes a swing in battle of the bag ladies

Karl Lagerfeld has seen the future of handbags with a revolutionary design, writes Grace Bradberry



Out: the 2.55 bag that was launched in 1955

KARL LAGERFELD unveiled Chanel's latest weapon in the handbag wars yesterday — a futuristic moulded plastic design in a figure-hugging shape. The 2005 is rigid, curved and about the size of a child's lunchbox. It marks a revolution in handbag design.

It is Lagerfeld's answer not only to his rivals, but also to the Chanel 2.55, the classic quilted-with-chain design that was launched in 1955 and now costs £670. Chanel dominated the 1980s with the 2.55, the renowned ladies-who-lunch bag for which suburban housewives would blow their savings. But in the 1990s, Chanel lost out to Prada, Gucci and Dior.

The new bag, which comes covered in tweed or leather, will be in the shops in July, as part of the autumn and winter collection. There are only four

2005 bags in existence and they are being tightly guarded — after the show they were taken by a security firm to an underground store at Chanel headquarters. As yet, one crucial detail remains undecided — Chanel executives have not come up with a price. By calling the bag 2005, Lagerfeld is staking his reputation on its being a success to mirror that of the 2.55. Chanel has also set a challenge to the Hong Kong counterfeiters: the new bag took a year to develop, and large sums were invested in the development of new machinery.

Naomi Campbell was first out with this technological triumph, looking like the cat that got the cream, as she swung it nonchalantly at her side.

The bag's swingability is one of its main attractions and it will doubtless prove a wonderful weapon not only for Chanel, but also for women trapped at crowded parties. Best of all, the 2005 will be highly offensive to anyone with politically correct sensibilities — interlocking Cs are prominently displayed on a large steel disc on the side, making the bag an emblem of conspicuous wealth.

Yesterday Lagerfeld was playing down the if-you've-got-it-flaunt-it element, allowing only the four bags to appear in what turned out to be a vintage collection. Outmeal tweeds were pleated into jackets and wrap coats, tied with cords of the fabric. Mohair was spun into black suits, with a soft grey woven into decorative edges, or quilted into soft violet jackets.

Lagerfeld also introduced a new silhouette yesterday — narrow and fitted through the torso with a well-defined shoulder — inspired by a book of Kyrner sculpture. The designer is playing a double game, emphasising Chanel's reputation as a dandy of discreet good taste on the one hand, while reintroducing the logos that he banished from the last two collections.

Yesterday's show included a witty mackintosh covered in an abstract design of Chanel logos, and a velvet *devant* of interlocking Cs. Carnellias cut from cream leather appeared on jackets, while 1920s cloche hats were also decorated with Chanel's signature flower.

Lagerfeld is currently fighting on another front. The decision to hold the show at Christie's was taken after the German designer fell out with the president of Sotheby's, France.

Fashion, The Times Magazine, page 72



In: plastic fantastic. The 2005 bag is body-shaped and boasts "swingability"

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Tests back alert on Sellafeld pigeons

By MICHAEL HORNSBY, AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

THE Ministry of Agriculture has found "significant" levels of radioactivity in pigeons near the Sellafeld nuclear plant in Cumbria.

Jeff Rooker, the Food Safety Minister, said yesterday the results confirmed provisional findings by British Nuclear Fuels, which owns the plant, and vindicated advice issued a month ago to avoid handling, slaughtering or eating any birds found within ten miles of the site. Most of the affected birds were feral or racing pigeons.

"Although it is unlikely that any affected feral pigeons are being eaten, we took precautionary action and advised against eating the birds as soon as the significance of the contamination levels came to light," Mr Rooker said. The ministry said the main radionuclide involved was caesium-137, a by-product of the fission process. Monitoring had found levels of radioactive caesium of up to 50,000 becquerels per kilogram in the breastmeat of pigeons.

It calculated that consumption of the breastmeat of 20 birds would give a radiation dose of 1 millisievert (mSv), the maximum dose that is considered safe for one person to absorb over a year.

A BNFL spokesman said: "These are very small amounts, less than the average background level of radiation. We think the birds may have become contaminated after roosting in old buildings."

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America lays claim to JFK auction lots

Kennedy curios attract state's attention and family's wrath, writes Tunku Varadarajan



Private secretary Evelyn Lincoln with Kennedy

A LONG-AWAITED auction of John F. Kennedy memorabilia was thrown into confusion yesterday after federal officials laid claim to at least 14 lots on the ground that they belong to the state. Experts from the National Archives and Records Administration, dispatched to New York to sift through the material, assert that some items might even contain classified material. However, the sale, to be held at Guernsey's auction house in Manhattan next Wednesday and Thursday, will go ahead and Arlan Ettinger, the house's president, has offered officials his full co-operation. Proving once more that there is a profit to be made from hero worship, more than 600 personal items — ranging from the Cartier watch that the President was wearing when he was shot to one of Mrs Kennedy's satin nightgowns — will be sold. The sale comes two years after an auction from the estate of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis raised \$34 million (£20.6 million) at Sotheby's. Next week's auction is expected to bring in a smaller sum — perhaps \$5 million — but there were at least ten times as many items for sale in 1996. Yet unlike the previous auction, which provoked a fresh outbreak of adulation and ruffled no family feathers, next week's event has stirred a

bitter brew of controversy — even before yesterday's investigations by the national archives. This is because most of the items being offered for sale come not from the Kennedy family — or with its sanction — but from a private collector called Robert White, who acquired many of the more personal items from Evelyn Lincoln, the President's private secretary. The Kennedy family has said that sale is unseemly, and that many of the President's jottings, diaries and notes from his wife ought not to be sold in public for profit. More damagingly, they have also questioned the late Mrs Lincoln's right to several of the items, suggesting that they did not legitimately pass into her hands. The auction house is satisfied of Mr White's right to sell. Neither of JFK's children has spoken publicly on the subject, but Paul Kirk, the head of the Kennedy Library Foundation, described the

auction as disgusting. Perhaps the most troublesome lots are two of President Kennedy's diaries. Previously unknown and unpublished, they were written on two trips to Europe, the Middle East and to Asia in 1951 and are expected to fetch at least \$1 million. Mr White obtained the diaries from Mrs Lincoln, who amassed a vast collection of memorabilia in the 12 years she worked with JFK. Mr White — an admirer of JFK par excellence — befriended Mrs Lincoln in 1990, cultivating her so assiduously until her death in 1996 that she left him the lion's share of her treasure trove. Despite the controversies, Guernsey's is reporting unprecedented interest from prospective buyers. There would, it seems, be something here for every taste, from campaign pins and cigarette lighters with JFK's image to Mrs Kennedy's driving licence and the Kennedy family bible. The items with the highest profile, both expected to fetch about \$1 million, are JFK's Cartier watch, worn on the day of his death, and his black alligator briefcase, made by Hermès, to which the President was deeply attached. A small piece of hotel newspaper with President Kennedy's last scribbles and doodles is one of the items that has attracted the attention of the authorities. Written on stationery from the Rice Hotel in Houston, the note merely says: "plan trip", "hotel", and "Sara McClenden", the name of a Texan journalist. Priced at \$40,000, the 6in by 4in sheet could have outstripped that figure by an astonishing margin. The scribbles were made on Nov-



Photographs of Jacqueline Kennedy, estimated at \$1,000 to \$1,500



An unpriced Cartier watch JFK was wearing when shot, and a set of his long johns, priced at \$2,000 to \$3,000



A 1960 election campaign lighter estimated to fetch from \$200 to \$300 and six gift cigars (\$400-\$600)

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Hunt threat recedes as Bill is talked out

A ban could be years away, report James Landale and Philip Webster

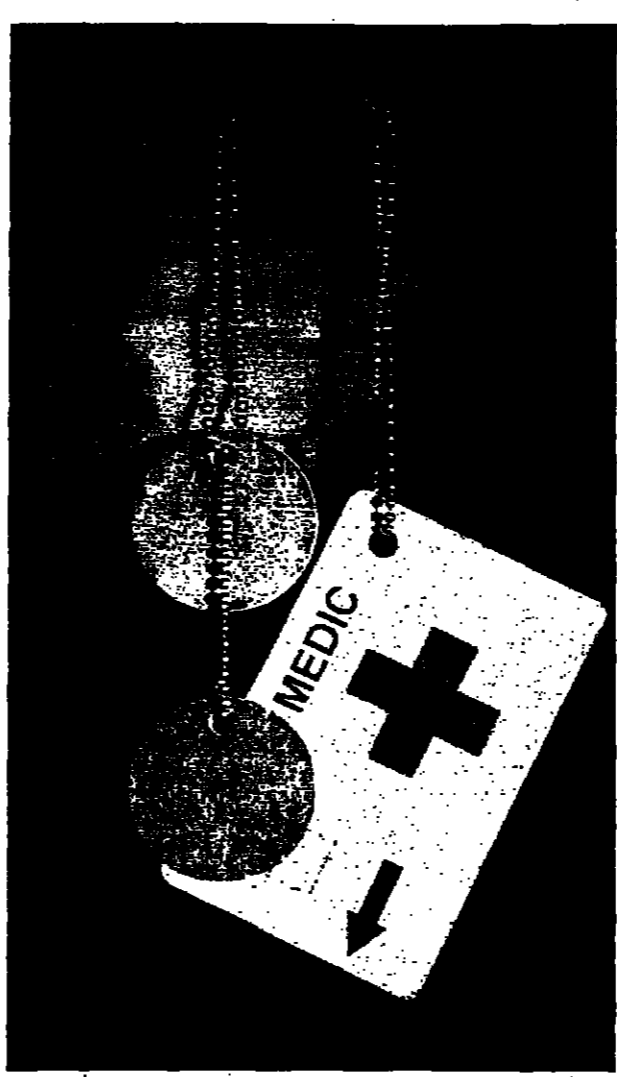
OPponents of foxhunting faced up to the reality that they could be years away from their goal last night after the Labour backbench attempt to enforce a ban finally ran out of time. Protesters claimed that Tony Blair and the Government had reneged on their promises as Mike Foster's Bill was "talked out" for the second week running and now has only a technical chance of reappearing in the present session of Parliament. Supporters of Mr Foster, including animal welfare groups and government whips, privately accepted that the Bill was dead. If by any chance it managed to get more time on the floor of the Commons, it would suffer the same fate. But the anti-hunting lobby immediately vowed to come back year after year until they achieved an aim for which there is a massive parliament-

ary majority. Campaigners have two plans of action: they will again secure a place high in the ballot for private members' legislation next November, and they will attempt to amend Jack Straw's criminal justice Bill. As the Bill ground to a halt yesterday, campaigners accused Tory MPs of parliamentary vandalism after they tabled hundreds of amendments and talked at length to ensure that the Bill failed to make any progress. Mr Foster, Labour MP for Worcester, insisted he would still try to save the measure. He said: "If my opponents think they can abuse the House and the electorate by engaging in delaying tactics, they are sadly mistaken, because the British electorate want to see this Bill passed." Kate Parmenter, a spokeswoman for the Campaign for the Protection of Hunted Ani-



mals, said: "We will continue to use every opportunity in the lifetime of this Parliament to ensure there is a ban." The Hunt Saboteurs Association promised to mount a summer offensive, including advertising for members for the first time and producing a video of their activities. "We will be trying everything possible so that the Government has to do something about it," Mr Blair was not in in the Commons yesterday, despite

promising an 11-year-old girl earlier this week that he would back a hunting ban. In a letter to Roseanne Mills, a junior member of the RSPCA, from Leeds, Mr Blair wrote: "I think foxhunting is the issue that causes the most public concern in the UK. I do think hunting is wrong and I will vote in favour of a ban in the House of Commons." However, Downing Street has made clear that the Prime Minister supported the recent declaration by Mr Straw that the Government should have no role to play in pushing through a ban. A last-ditch effort to save the Foster Bill failed after Betty Boothroyd, the Speaker, refused to select a new clause for debate, which would have transformed the Bill into an amendment to existing legislation and would have rendered the Tory delaying amendments useless. At 2pm, after five hours of tortuous debate and seven divisions, the Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill failed to complete its report stage.



The metal tags are being replaced with a smartcard

Forces teach old dog tag new tricks

By MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

TRIALS are under way to replace the traditional Armed Forces dog tag with a computer chip. Incorporated in a smartcard, it is encoded with the subject's name, blood group, service number, religion, allergies, previous medical treatment, and possibly career details including past misdemeanours. Medical personnel are issued with hand-held computers to "read" the cards and can operate them even if dressed in a nuclear, biological and chemical suit. The Ministry of Defence has been under pressure to develop a modern, computerised system after the current, paper-based medical records proved inadequate in the Falklands conflict and the 1991 Gulf War, when records were lost or damaged in the heat of battle. The identity disc—dog tag is the American term that has become widely used—was first worn by the service men in 1902. It was a metal disc with the serviceman's name, number, religion and regiment. Before 1902, the custom was to have the name on a strip of tape in a pocket. In 1916, the metal disc was replaced by one made from hardened cardboard, presumably because they were cheaper to produce. There were two discs, a green one that was supposed to remain with the soldier if he was killed, and a red one for attaching to his personal effects. The cardboard discs, which reverted to metal after the Second World War, often disintegrated, making it impossible to identify victims' remains uncovered after any length of time. The new system is being trialed out in Bosnia as part of a tri-service project known as Moss (medical operational support system), under the guidance of the Surgeon-General. A spokesman for Headquarters Land Command at Wiltton, Wiltshire, said the project would lead to the computerisation of all service medical records. In an interview with Land Command's media operations team, which has recently returned from Bosnia, Squadron Leader Richard Allaway, the Moss project leader, said: "Florence Nightingale would recognise the present system of reporting casualties because it hasn't changed since her time." The new system was "the most exciting leap forward in medical technology for the past 100 years." Casualties carrying the smartcard dog tag will have their medical condition monitored and entered into the computer chip at each stage of the journey from the battlefield to the field hospital, and then the service hospital in Britain. It is anticipated that this continuous updating of the computer chip will help to save many lives. The card will be backed up by a "telemetric link" that will beam digitised clinical images and medical information by satellite from the Mash doctor in the field to a specialist in a hospital in Britain who can offer expert advice on treatment. As part of the trials in Bosnia, a telemedicine satellite link has been set up between a British hospital unit in Sijovno and the Royal Hospital Haslar in Hampshire. The equipment in Sijovno, in central Bosnia, consists of a high-resolution digital camera, a laptop computer and a satellite telephone. The card will be backed up by a "telemetric link" that will beam digitised clinical images and medical information by satellite from the Mash doctor in the field to a specialist in a hospital in Britain who can offer expert advice on treatment.

Paedophiles face staying on in jail

By STEWART TENDLER, CRIME CORRESPONDENT

SEX offenders could remain in prison at the end of their sentences if they are still considered a risk to the public. Legislation is being considered amid concern over cases such as that of Robert Oliver, the child killer freed last year without any controls. Home Office officials accept the move would not solve the problem of six predatory paedophiles due to be released this year, without any supervision. They are among 150 offenders convicted before legislation was introduced requiring offenders to register their addresses and face possible supervision. They say, however, that it would close any loopholes and add to public safety. It would cover offenders who were not sufficiently mentally ill to be sent to hospital, but had personality disorders that created a threat. The Prime Minister yesterday ruled out using retrospective legislation to cover the paedophiles now coming out of prison. A spokesman for Mr Blair said: "You cannot apply an additional punishment retrospectively to people already sentenced."

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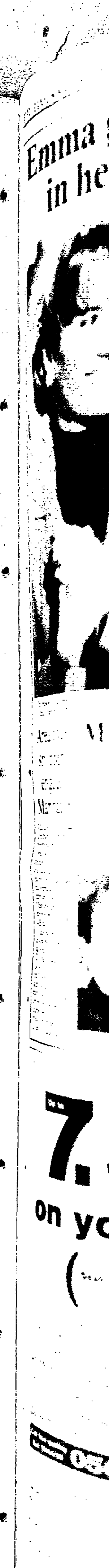
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Emma goes over the top in her Hillary role



Thompson in a scene from *Primary Colors*: she calls conspiracy theories "complete rubbish"

JAMES BONE'S NEW YORK



IT SEEMS *Emma Thompson* is taking her Hillary Clinton-like role in *Primary Colors* a little too seriously. After learning the First Lady's accent and body language for her part as a politician's wife in the forthcoming film, the left-leaning British actress has started to act like Mrs Clinton in real life.

Before this week's opening in America, Thompson appeared on television — just as Mrs Clinton did — to defend the President against allegations of hanky-panky in the White House.

"For thousands of years, power has gone hand in hand with libido," Thompson says. "We have always known this. This is nothing new. Do you think that people are just going to turn up, they're going to be great and powerful and really, really nice as well and not have any flaws?"

Echoing Mrs Clinton's criticism of the Independent Counsel investigating the President's sex life, she denounced Kenneth Starr as "a psychotic".

Thompson admits that she boned up on the American system with a book titled *Politics for Dummies*. As an Oscar-winner, however, she speaks with some authority, and it will no doubt come as a relief to Mr Clinton that she seems so enamoured of his

famous sex appeal. In the film, based on Joe Klein's celebrated *roman à clef* about the 1992 presidential campaign, Thompson plays Susan Stanton, the wife of a womanising Southern Governor modelled on former Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas.

The film's director, confirmed "friend of Bill" Mike Nichols, has been accused of making changes to protect Mr Clinton's Hollywood presidency. A scene in which Thompson's character kisses an idealistic black political aide (based on George Stephanopoulos and played by the British actor Adrian Lester) was cut out for "creative reasons", and Thompson herself was said to have refused to wear shin pads to make her ankles thicker, like Hillary's.

The controversy worsened when John Travolta suggested that Mr Clinton had promised to help his beloved Scientology movement in Germany, with some pundits alleging that the actor had toned down his portrayal of the Clintonesque Mr Stanton in return.

Thompson rejects these conspiracy theories. "Complete rubbish," she insists. "The White House has got far more to deal with. What with the Monica Lewinsky affair, that much is certainly true."

Area code snobbery engages Manhattan

RESIDENTS of Manhattan are frantically ordering new telephone lines they do not need for fear of finding themselves in social Siberia. The local 212 area code is running out of capacity, and the telephone company is to introduce a 646 code for new Manhattan lines. Some apparently fear their friends will stop calling if they have to dial the new digits, or assume the worst — that you have moved to Brooklyn.

A burn begging on the Bowery shows cars at the traffic lights a sign promising "I don't drink any more." When sympathetic drivers fork over their small change, he flips the sign to reveal another message: "I just don't drink any less."

Much ho-ho about nothing

A UNIQUELY Buddhist humour was on display at a concert to raise money for New York's Tibet House, the Tibetan cultural institution founded by Richard Gere and Uma Thurman's father that is a cornerstone of "Tibet chic".

The singer Patti Smith came up with the following Zen joke: "A hipster goes into a café and asks the waitress, 'How's the pie?' She says, 'It's gone.' The delighted hipster replies, 'In that case, I'll have two slices!'"

A copy editor (sub-editor) at the New York Times graciously informed colleagues that he would soon be getting a sex-change operation.

He went on to explain that he would be dressing as a woman in the coming months until the surgery is performed.

The newspaper has agreed to provide him with his own lavatory until he becomes a she. He is changing his name from Dennis to Donna.

Taiwan says it with a solitary flower

MADAME Chiang Kai-shek celebrated her 101st birthday at her home on New York's Upper East Side. Raised in the American South and educated in Boston, the wife of the Chinese nationalist leader used her Southern-accented English and charm to rally Western nations to support his fight against communism.

Once the most powerful

woman in China, she now lives alone in New York and spends her time reading newspapers and the Bible. When the weather is fine, she ventures out with a nurse to church or for a stroll in Central Park. President Lee Teng-hui of Taiwan sent her an orchid as a birthday present even though he has been blamed for forcing her into exile.



Chiang: 101 years old

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Stricken Yeltsin prompts new scare

FROM RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW

PRESIDENT YELTSIN cancelled all appointments yesterday and remained out of sight at his country residence after he was struck down by an "acute respiratory infection".

In the latest health scare to hit the Kremlin, a presidential spokesman said the Russian leader had contracted "acute laryngotracheitis", an inflammation of the larynx and trachea which doctors were treating with antibiotics.

Despite the brief official version, there was still some confusion over Mr Yeltsin's true state of health. On Thursday he looked and sounded perfectly healthy and even recorded a radio address broadcast yesterday.

His sickness was simply a "hoarse voice and cold", according to Valentin Yumashev, head of the presidential administration, or he had contracted "flu", according to Anatoli Chubais, the Deputy Prime Minister.

The latter explanation seems more likely, particularly since western Russia is in the grip of an influenza epidemic which has hit children and old people in particular.

Superstitious Russians believe Mr Yeltsin may have tempted the devil earlier this week when he boasted that he had passed a recent medical check-up in perfect shape and jokingly challenged reporters to beat him on the tennis court

or athletics track. "The results [of the medical tests] show no deviations," he said, taking the precaution of knocking on a wooden panel for luck. "The subject of the President's health should be closed. This subject does not exist."

However, by yesterday — Friday the 13th — he was too sick to travel into work and hold meetings with a visiting German delegation.

Going on past experience, there is now likely to be a period of well-rehearsed press claims and denials about the true state of the Russian leader's health. However, it should become clear quickly if this is simply a fresh bout of flu or something more serious.

Next Thursday, Mr Yeltsin is due to host a summit in Moscow of leaders from the Commonwealth of Independent States, comprising countries of the former Soviet Union except the Baltic republics. Later this month he is set to host another summit, this time for the French and German leaders. If he fails to recover in time for these events, fears will grow that something more serious is wrong.

Over the past four years, the Russian leader has survived at least two heart attacks, multiple bypass heart surgery, double pneumonia and several prolonged absences from office blamed on colds and flu.



President Yeltsin, in fine form on Thursday, chats to scientist Nikolai Basov as pop singer Larisa Dolina listens in

Russian leader faces chest infection risk

THE flu epidemic which spread from Siberian Russia to Moscow is reported to have claimed its most important victim: President Yeltsin. If this is confirmed, and the President is not merely suffering from a heavy cold, it has also infected one of its more vulnerable patients.

Having long-standing heart disease, and a recent history of pneumonia, increases the risk of serious chest complications which would reduce the supply of well-oxygenated blood to the heart and brain; the circulation to both organs may be poor as the result of Mr Yeltsin's underlying condi-



tion. President Yeltsin's attack started with a sore throat, aches and pains, and a severe headache.

The headache is usually a prominent symptom at this stage of the disease, and it is normally bad enough to make even the hardiest patient find work difficult.

Within a day or two most patients develop a dry, unproductive cough. The tempera-

ture rises, the cough worsens, and starts to become productive of sputum.

Those patients who are most at risk from flu can suffer severe complications from the disease, even in its initial viral stage.

The fear when treating a patient like Mr Yeltsin is that, even if the first stage of the flu passes without trouble, the patient may then develop secondary bacterial infections. The most dreaded and common complication is a bacterial pneumonia, and it is for this reason that the President's doctors have immediately prescribed broad spectrum antibiotics.

If pneumonia does develop, a possibly unsustainable strain could be placed on his damaged heart. Even if the President develops no secondary pneumonia, the effects of the flu on his lungs will be detectable, if they are carefully tested, for some weeks to come.

DR THOMAS STUTTFORD

WORLD IN BRIEF

US halts Chinese nuclear aid to Iran

Washington: American intelligence discovered secret negotiations between China and Iran for the delivery of hundreds of tons of nuclear material only weeks after the Clinton Administration had received a pledge from Beijing to halt assistance to Tehran (Tom Rhodes writes). Contacts between the United States and China last month appeared yesterday to have stopped the deal. The State Department said it was confident that China would no longer deliver the anhydrous hydrogen fluoride, used in enriching uranium, to the Isfahan nuclear research centre.

'Mafia link' aide dismissed

Rome: The Italian Cabinet voted unanimously to dismiss a senior Interior Ministry official accused of links to the Mafia. The allegations against Angelo Giorgianni, an under-secretary who made his name as a Mafia-fighting prosecutor in Sicily, created an uproar, largely because he refused to resign for the good of the governing coalition. (AP)

30 Kurd rebels killed

Ankara: Security forces claimed to have killed 30 Kurdish rebels for the loss of two soldiers in clashes in southeast Turkey. The state-run Anatolian news agency said 23 rebels of the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) had been killed during operations in Sirnak province. A further seven PKK guerrillas were killed in separate clashes. (Reuters)

Senate seeks Saddam trial

Washington: In a largely symbolic move, the US Senate voted unanimously to urge the creation of a United Nations tribunal to try President Saddam Hussein of Iraq as an international war criminal. The 93-0 vote on the nonbinding resolution was a gesture of political frustration in dealing with the Baghdad dictator. (AP)

Luther King killer in coma

Nashville: James Earl Ray, 70, serving 99 years in jail for the murder in 1968 of Martin Luther King, the black-rights leader, is in a coma with cirrhosis of the liver at Nashville Memorial Hospital, Tennessee, which described his condition as critical. Ray first confessed to the killing, but then recanted and has been seeking to clear his name. (AP)

Town clerk causes a stink

Rome: Municipal workers in Mediglia, near Milan, were told to wash more by the town clerk, who complained of body odour. Enraged employees promised to shower in the office every morning and wash in the bidet every afternoon. The mayor defended them, saying that if they sweated more than most, it was because they worked harder than most.

Gucci ex-wife 'offered friend £1m to accept murder guilt'

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

THE divorced wife of Maurizio Gucci, the murdered fashion empire heir, was yesterday accused of offering a former friend and confidante £1 million to confess to the crime and so deflect attention from the murder charge against herself.

Patrizia Reggiani, dubbed "The Black Widow" by the Italian press, was arrested in January last year and charged with ordering the killing of her former husband on a Milan street three years ago. The two alleged hit men were also arrested, together with a hotel doorman and Fina Auremmia, a clairvoyante from Naples, who was Signora

Reggiani's long-standing confidante. All five accused are to go on trial next month.

Last week, after more than a year of silence, Signora Auremmia told police that Signora Reggiani had ordered her ex-husband's murder because of the "insatiable hatred" she had felt towards him after he took up with another woman.

Yesterday Italian newspapers reported that Signora Auremmia had made a further statement, alleging that when she and Signora Reggiani were imprisoned together in the women's section of San Vittore jail in Milan, Signora Reggiani had offered

her £1 million "if I would assume full responsibility for the murder of Maurizio and serve the life sentence for her".

The widow had allegedly also urged Signora Auremmia to tell police that she had carried out the murder "because I knew Patrizia hated him", and to pretend that she had afterwards tried to extort money from Signora Reggiani "because otherwise I would tell police she put me up to it".

La Repubblica said Signora Auremmia's accusation was compatible with evidence obtained by police from secret recordings of remarks made by Ivano Savioni, the hotel doorman.

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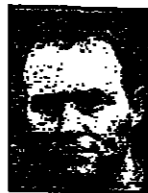
Pistol-packing nuns defend the faith in Kosovo

ADRIET in a sea of Islam, the nine nuns of St Joanikija are on their guard. Each one carries a 9mm pistol, courtesy of the Serbian Ministry of the Interior. The past two weeks of mayhem in Kosovo have confirmed the worst fears of the sisters, whose 14th-century Devic Monastery lies just a few miles from the battle-ground of Prekaz, where Serb security forces killed 52 ethnic Albanians.

Sister Anastasia, 42, the Mother Superior, has already survived a car chase with Albanian hoodlums. Tucking the brown-leather holster back beneath her habit, she admitted Kosovo might be a lost cause for the Orthodox Church. "According to my experience with our Albanian neighbours, they do not tell us anything in advance," she said, her dark eyes sparkling beneath her Orthodox wimple. "Their attitude is not to destroy the monastery immediately but probably later. We will not survive if Kosovo becomes independent."

Its destiny has become central to the hysterical media war between Serbs and Albanians. In Belgrade newspapers the nuns have reportedly been attacked and mutilated; in Albanian papers they have stockpiled weapons. As usual in Kosovo, the truth is buried somewhere in between.

Sister Anastasia came to the peaceful tributary of the Llausha valley when she was 12, and during her 30 years at the monastery she has seen ethnic relations in the surrounding Drenica region steadily deteriorate. Ten years ago, as Slobodan Milosevic



Tom Walker in Llausha meets the small band of sisters who keep the Orthodox flag flying in the middle of a sea of Islam

attempted to consolidate his repression of the restive Albanian population, the Ministry of the Interior provided the pistols. "We were taught the basics," said Sister Anastasia, adding she had never used her weapon. Since the recent troubles began, the nuns have not ventured from the monastery, and at night one of them is always on watch. They possess a radio and a telephone, but a distress call would be of little use. "The police are

World War, but still the bones of St Joanikija lie secure in the cool serenity of a small chapel, cloaked in fading frescos. "It is historically testified that this is the cradle of Serbia," said Sister Anastasia.

The nuns survive by selling wine, honey, eggs and other produce in local markets. The oldest sister is 70 and the youngest 23. They chop logs, haul water from the well and tug the bell of their chapel, its peal competing with the muezzin's cry from the nearby mosque.

◀ We are scared but not pathetic. We believe in God and the support He gives us ▶

frightened to come here," she said. "We are scared, too, but not pathetic. We believe in God and the support He gives us."

Their monastery is one of the most beautiful in the Kosovo region where, according to Serbs, there are more saints buried than anywhere in the world apart from Jerusalem. The monastery was attacked by the Turks and razed by the local Albanian population during the Second

Dissidents released by Seoul President

FROM JENNIFER VEALE IN SEOUL

THE President of South Korea, Kim Dae Jung, who was jailed and tortured by authoritarian governments, released 74 political prisoners yesterday and also exonerated millions of reckless drivers.

The amnesty covered 5.5 million offenders — mostly petty criminals or drunk and dangerous drivers.

Of the 2,304 prisoners convicted of more serious crimes who were freed, only 74 were prisoners of conscience. They amount to only 15 per cent of all such prisoners. Six were released because they were aged over 70. One, Shin In Young, had spent more than 30 years behind bars.

Rights organisations said the gesture was "deplorable", as they had expected Mr Kim to free many more inmates to mark his recent inauguration. Among those released was Hwang Seok Young, 55, the novelist, imprisoned in 1993 for visiting the North without official permission.

The North Korean, Woo Yong Gak, reputedly the world's longest-serving prisoner of conscience with 40 years in solitary confinement, was not freed. The Justice Ministry said he was under 70 and so ineligible.

◻ Beijing: North Korea is on "wartime mobilisation" for military exercises, said a statement issued to foreign diplomats and aid officials in Pyongyang, the capital. (AP)



Bahram Khan, 29, an accused murderer, kneels in the centre of Kabul's football stadium moments before being shot. At least 35,000 people turned out for the execution in the Afghan capital yesterday. The crowd

Eye for an eye in Taleban's Kabul pleaded for mercy: "Let him live," they shouted. Even the judge pleaded for Khan's life. However, Nek

Mohammad, the father of Asadullah, the victim, told the crowd: "We won't forgive him. If we let him live he will kill again." The victim's brother fired two shots from a machinegun into Khan. (AFP/AP)

French Left on victory march

FROM BLN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

FRANCE heads to the polls in regional elections tomorrow, with the Left predicting a crushing win that will consolidate its hold on power, and the right gloomily preparing for "certain defeat".

The one-round election will decide control of 22 regional councils, crucial political power bases as well as sources of patronage, local contracts and, in some cases, rampant corruption. Buoyed by encouraging opinion polls and high popularity ratings, the French Left has treated the campaign almost as a victory march.

Such is the disarray and depression on the Right, by contrast, that anything less than a complete rout will be seen as a success. Jacques Chirac, the Gaullist President, still smearing from the debacle of last year's legislative elections that left him sharing power with a left-wing government, has maintained a studiously low profile.

The Centre-Right coalition currently runs all but two of the regional assemblies, but polls predict that at least half of these will now be surrendered to the "plural left" coalition of Socialists, Communists and Greens. The French Left is on a political roll: with a still-popular Prime Minister in the form of Lionel Jospin, broad agreement on policy, and a significant feel-good factor growing out of the improving economy.

Lawyers tell of long hunt for dozens of Clinton 'victims'

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

LAWYERS for Paula Jones revealed details of a five-month hunt to trace a host of women from Bill Clinton's past as part of an attempt to convince a federal judge yesterday that the sexual harassment suit against the President should come to trial in May.

The Jones team, in response to a Clinton motion for summary judgment, filed its rebuttal at the federal courthouse in Little Rock. For the first time it included portions of testimony and affidavits from dozens of women designed to prove a pattern of past sexual conduct by the President.

When Mr Clinton was questioned by Mrs Jones's lawyers

in January, Judge Susan Weber Wright, who is trying the case, allowed them to ask him only about seven women whom she judged material to the case. They included Monica Lewinsky, the White House trainee who sparked the biggest scandal of his presidency after allegations of their affair were revealed in January; Jennifer Flowers, the cabaret singer who has alleged a 12-year relationship with Mr Clinton; and Mrs Jones herself, the former Arkansas employee who claims he asked her to perform oral sex in a Little Rock hotel room in 1991.

Kathleen Willey, a former White House aide who report-

edly claims the President groped her in the Oval Office, and Dolly Kyle Browning, the childhood sweetheart who alleges a 33-year affair, were also included in the questioning. The judge has since excluded any evidence concerning Ms Lewinsky.

The President, in his testimony, acknowledged a sexual encounter with only one of the seven, Ms Flowers. But the Jones team said they had tracked down dozens of other women to establish a pattern of harassment.

By revealing the testimony to the judge yesterday, the lawyers hoped to prove their relevance to the case.

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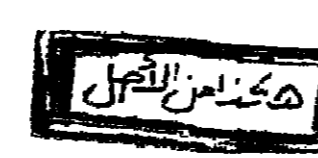
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Asteroid experts postpone end of world

By Nigel Hawkes
SCIENCE EDITOR

ON SECOND thoughts, the world may not end in 2028. Just a day after American astronomers had announced that an asteroid was heading our way and might collide with Earth, fresh data have changed the calculations.

Nobody got it wrong. The astronomers who sounded the warnings based their calculations on less than three months' observation of asteroid 1997 XF11. This is not enough to establish its orbit precisely.

One of them, Dr Brian Marsden, of the International Astronomical Union, said that it would be worth looking at old images of the sky, since there was every chance that one or more of them would show XF11 on one of its previous close approaches, which occur every 21 months.

Two astronomers from NASA did just that, identifying XF11 in pictures taken in 1990 by the Mount Palomar Observatory — the very year identified by Dr Marsden as one of the best prospects. In the right place in the picture was XF11, its identity as an asteroid not recognised by whoever had taken the picture.

The data gave Drs Donald Yeomans and Paul Chodas of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, a much better grasp of the asteroid's orbit. With its help, they recalculated where it would be on October 26, 2028 and found that it would miss the Earth.

"We are saying now that the probability of an impact is zero," Dr Yeomans said. It should be 600,000 miles away, not the 30,000 miles that first data suggested.

Millennium fears, page 22

Space 'lifeboat' lifts hopes for Mars trip

Giles Whittell at Edwards Air Force Base in California sees how NASA is planning a great escape

DREAMS of manned flight to Mars were at stake when the most unusual "lifeboat" to be built was dropped from the wing of a B52 bomber this week with only a parachute to cushion its landing on the Mojave Desert.

Gliding towards Earth from 23,000ft, the first NASA spacecraft built to carry people since the space shuttle landed with a bump and a cloud of dust after its maiden flight on Thursday.

The X38 is a wingless, pod without engines or landing wheels. Its first role will be as an emergency "crew return vehicle" for the next space station, the International Space Station project led by the US, with contributions from Europe, Japan and Russia.

Astronauts living in the station will need a lifeboat for quick exits should anything go wrong.

In X38's cramped quarters, designed to support seven astronauts for a maximum of nine hours, ride some lofty interplanetary hopes.

NASA's ultimate aim with this stubby orbiting ambulance is "to learn how to build low-cost human spacecraft", said a jubilant John Muratore,

the X38 mission director, after Thursday's successful test.

He added: "If we don't manage that, we can't have any dreams of going to Mars or the asteroids or back to the Moon."

Capsules similar to the X38 could eventually carry astronauts from the space station to higher orbits for the start of missions to Mars and beyond, Mr Muratore said. But this week NASA was more concerned that the parachute of the X38 would open.

Slung beneath the wing of the oldest B52 still flying, the spacecraft wobbled in the plane's wake when released high over the desert, then glided for four seconds using the "lifting body" principle developed in the 1970s.

Like the space shuttle, its fuselage uses an aerofoil cross-section to provide lift without conventional wings that could break up on re-entry.

A drogue parachute de-

signed to slow the craft's descent sent it into a slow spin, causing jitters in the control room. However, at 10,000ft a huge, steerable parafoil opened as planned. A NASA technician controlling it from a computer keyboard on the ground pulled off a smooth landing roughed only by a sagebrush bush.

Retractable skids absorbed some of the impact, which Mr Muratore described as softer than landing on an aircraft carrier.

The test was low-tech by NASA standards, but crucial to the agency's hopes of resuming manned space exploration in an age of tightening budgets. Using army parafoils and commercial computers, two prototype X38s have been built for a relatively modest \$10 million (£6 million).

Four production models will be built over the next five years for \$500 million, or a quarter of the initial budget estimate.

Few will be more relieved by the X38's progress than the astronauts due to occupy the International Space Station. Without it their only escape craft would have been the ageing Soyuz, currently attached to the beleaguered Russian Mir.

Despite the Soviet-built station's string of calamities last year, including multiple computer failures and a near-fatal collision, NASA has continued sending astronauts to Mir, and backing Russian participation in the new station.

The bulk of the International Space Station is being built by Boeing in America, with the first section due for launch within three months. But the project is a far cry indeed from the jingoistic Mercury and Apollo programmes, in which funds were virtually unlimited and personnel mostly military.

Strolling into his press conference in an open-necked denim shirt, Mr Muratore asked if anyone had noticed a skull and crossbones stencilled on the X38.

"We call ourselves the Pirates," he explained. "To do things at low cost, you have to break the rules."

Gore puts Earth in the picture

FROM TOM RHODES
IN WASHINGTON

AN IDEA conceived by Al Gore, the US Vice-President, at three in the morning one day last month became reality yesterday when he announced his plan for a permanent live image of the Earth continuously available by satellite to the whole world.

The "all Earth, all the time" images of the full, sunlit planet spinning on its axis against the blackness of space are to be transmitted from a small spacecraft positioned between Earth and the Sun that will be launched before the millennium.

Mr Gore, who has made protection of the global environment a pillar of his political career, believes the picture, available both on television and the Internet, would resemble the historic portrait taken by the Apollo 17



Gore keen to promote environmental issues

astronauts, the last men on the Moon, in December 1972. The new project, he said, would prove just as inspirational, educationally, spiritually and scientifically.

"With the entire hemisphere

in full view, fully lit by the Sun, scientists will be able to analyse systems and cloud patterns in ways they cannot today," he said. With global warming a growing concern, this would be of tremendous value. Mr Gore, who announced the scheme at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, spoke with the idea one morning last month.

The project is expected to cost less than \$50 million (£30 million) and would involve a spacecraft weighing 330lb and about 5ft in diameter, stationed a million miles up in space, orbiting the Sun in tandem with the Earth at the point where solar gravity exactly counterbalances the terrestrial.

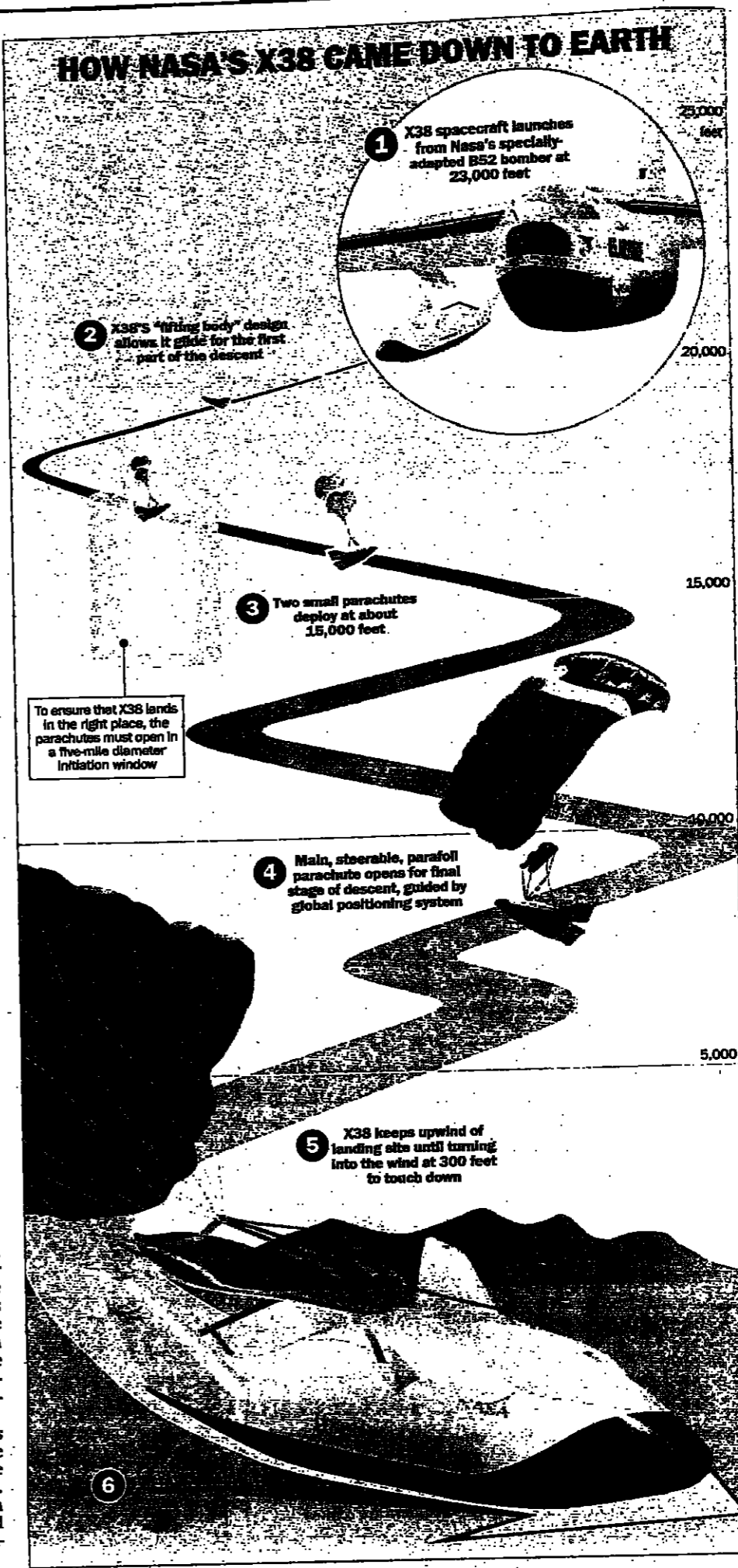
Equipped with an 8in telescope and a three-colour high-definition camera, the satellite would be able to capture almost instantaneously features as small as 5 square

miles, including changing cloud patterns, hurricanes and fires in oil fields or forests.

Storm on Mars: A dust storm which grew to more than 1,000 miles across in less than two days has been observed on Mars by a NASA satellite in orbit around the planet (Nigel Hawkes writes).

The discovery represents just part of a mass of data from Mars Global Surveyor published yesterday in the journal Science. Other finds include the formation of ice clouds at a height of 31 miles, a 400mph jet stream around the North Pole, a complex magnetic field and new information about Martian geology.

Dr John Pearl, of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Centre in Maryland, said of the storm: "It grew very rapidly, to over 1,000 miles across in less than two days, and lasted about a month before dissipating around Christmas."



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Indian bears' dance of pain

Christopher Thomas sees a show based on ritual torture

It is a dreadful spectacle. A sloth bear prances awkwardly to a fast drumbeat, its snout jammed almost shut by a leather strap, its nostrils festering from a rope hooked through them. Beneath its neck, hidden by fur, there is a permanent open sore — kept there to inflict pain when the collar is tugged.

The bear, Gangaram, bellows when the rope is yanked. People laugh. It sways its head and body to order. It lies down, stands up, turns in circles and dances: all in response to a wave of a stick by its owner, Sapin Khan, a member of the Kalandar gypsy clan, owners of dancing bears since the 16th century.

As a cub, Gangaram's incisors and canines were yanked out. Some of his claws are missing, removed to be sold as good luck talismans. He was trained through a combination of starvation and beating. His will is now broken.

Sapin Khan bought Gangaram as a cub six years ago for 7,000 rupees (£109) from another Kalandar clan member. The animal was held down while a red-hot needle was pushed through the top of his snout until it entered his mouth. A rope was threaded into the wound, through the palate and into the nostrils — one of the most sensitive parts of its body.

Gangaram's performance is unbearable to watch: but strangely people are captivated. There are an estimated 1,200 dancing bears in India, making them even more endangered than tigers, some experts say. They are seen performing on the roads leading from Delhi to the Taj Mahal and other tourist attractions, where foreign visitors pay to take pictures of them.

Gangaram's "home" is a scrap of ground in a shanty on the outskirts of Ghaziabad, near Delhi. He is tethered by a piece of rope too short to enable him to walk or stand. The plight of such creatures has moved the London-based World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), which works in 70 countries, to try to help establish a rescue centre in Delhi for freed dancing bears.

The project is snarled in a bureaucratic mess. Maneka Gandhi, India's leading animal rights campaigner and an independent MP, said it was blocked by corruption and



Broken spirit: Sapin Khan forces Gangaram to dance. As a cub, a red-hot needle was pushed through his snout into his mouth. A rope threaded through the hole makes him respond to the tug of his handler

inertia. Government land in Delhi had been earmarked, but nothing was happening.

Bear performances, snake charming and monkey shows are illegal under animal rights legislation, but laws are not easily enforced in India. The WSPA says there is widespread smuggling and selling of bear cubs. "Most cubs are taken from the wild and sold at village markets between November and March. During the peak tourist season the bears can earn their owners up to 3,000 rupees a month."

John Joseph, regional manager of WSPA for Asia, says most cubs are taken from their mothers too young and usually die. Those that survive rarely live more than eight years, against a normal life span in the wild of three times that. "The first two years are particularly cruel. The cubs often have their noses brutally pierced several times."

Bears are smuggled from India into Nepal, where their gall bladders are removed and sold as an aphrodisiac. The animals are regarded as protectors of children and a safeguard against evil spirits.

Sitting in his hut in the fetid alleyways of Kalandar Colony, Gangaram's owner denies ever being cruel. He insists that "even if I go hungry the bear gets milk, fruit and vegetables every day". He says Gangaram can only be made to work one day in three or he gets angry and disobedient. "We have been doing this work for centuries, but I don't want my son to do it. I want him to have an education."



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Head puts hope on curriculum

Teacher who took over after the murder of Philip Lawrence tells David Charter how she plans to give her pupils a brighter future

THE school where the murdered headmaster Philip Lawrence worked is to stop commemorating the anniversary of his death. Margaret Ryan, the new head teacher of St George's Roman Catholic school in Maida Vale, West London, wants to make a break from the past and to treat the date as an ordinary day.

Yesterday, in her first interview, Mrs Ryan said that she was determined to move the school on from its association in the public eye with violence and tragedy. She had tried to help it to overcome a past that threatened to overwhelm it.

Mr Lawrence was stabbed outside his school gates in December 1995 by Learco Chindamo, a persistent truant from another London school, whose gang was intent on attacking a 13-year-old pupil from St George's.

The cold-blooded killing provoked a national debate on the protection of teachers and pupils, and led to changes in the Offensive Weapons Act, making the carrying of a knife in school a crime. Followed as it was by the Dunblane killings, two years ago yesterday, the security of schools was transformed with the widespread introduction of video cameras.

Mr Lawrence had a reputation as a no-nonsense head who expelled more than 60 pupils in under three years. Despite its location near an affluent area of the capital, many of the children come from further afield in the Westminster diocese. Half the 500 pupils do not speak English as their first language and more than 100 have special educational needs.

Mr Lawrence's death left the school with the same social problems, but brought the additional burden of a high media profile. Mrs Ryan

describes her task as helping a notorious school to find normality.

"The majority of our children now would not have known Philip Lawrence," she said. "We don't want to forget about him, but to hold it in the background. Philip, like the rest of us, was in education, and education is about leading youngsters forward, not dwelling in the past, and giving them the opportunity to make the most of their lives."

The school's new atrium, which Mr Lawrence opened a few months before his death, will still bear his name, as does a memorial garden and a plaque at the school gates installed by his widow, Frances.

Mrs Ryan is backed by Peter Clare, the 65-year-old chairman of governors, who appointed Mr Lawrence. "We are not going to forget, but we are not going to have half-days and special services like we had the first couple of years," he said. "Life goes on."

The new head was plucked from another Catholic school, Bishop Challoner in East London, by the diocese. "When I came, I didn't know the school, I didn't know Philip Lawrence, I didn't know any of the staff."

"The staff were in various stages of shock and trauma, and I just felt they needed someone who would take the load if the load got too much. I did a lot of disciplining of pupils, because the staff felt they would like to take a back seat on those issues. Nerves were frayed and, if there were two lads having a go at each other, I think people were a bit reluctant to go in at first."

The teachers have been given a boost by termly visits from Cardinal Basil Hume. Mrs Ryan said: "Roman Catholicism is the main criteria for admitting children: it is the ethos of our school and is fundamental in all of our dealings with pupils and with staff."

She added: "The children were traumatised, but they bounced back a lot quicker than the adults. But the staff didn't want to stop, out of loyalty for Philip. They worked very hard and improved the GCSE results at the end of that year."

Mr Lawrence's academic legacy was a threefold increase in students passing five GCSEs at grades A to C, up to 20 per cent in 1996 from 6 per cent in 1994. Mrs Ryan has been determined to build upon that by refurbishing science laboratories and improving the school's information technology.

But her most far-reaching



Margaret Ryan in the Lawrence memorial garden: "We don't want to forget about him, but education is about leading youngsters forward"

decision is that no more children will be expelled if at all possible. She is working with the local authority to introduce a "school within a school", so that pupils who would have been expelled receive academic and social help in a special unit.

"There are extreme levels of poverty here," Mrs Ryan said. "A lot of children are in bed and breakfast accommodation, there are numbers of refugee children, some unaccompanied by either parent, including children who have seen families killed in Angola, Iran and Somalia."

"These backgrounds made it doubly important to keep children in school, she said. A mobile classroom next to the main building will be used for the unit.

"Some of the exclusions that Philip made would not have stood up in today's world," Mrs Ryan said. "In order to exclude a child, you have to prove that the school has put in all the support systems possible, and that is something I have had to change with the staff, because they were coming to me and saying 'This lad must go.' You cannot put a child out permanently

for the first offence. Exclusion has to be the last resort.

"There have been five since I came here and I am not proud of that statistic. But those are children who put themselves beyond our help."

"In schools where children come from such complex backgrounds but perhaps don't have a stable parent there to look after them, these complexities are always going to be there."

"That is why they get involved in the street culture. They don't go home, they only go to get dressed to go out again. You can see it by the clothes they wear. In any year group, you have got a handful, at the most a dozen."

Mr Clare has nothing but praise for Mrs Ryan's work. "There is a different style now, there has got to be," he said. "Margaret is a very motherly figure. She is very strict but she has some good ideas about keeping children in, even though they are suspended or excluded. I believe this plan could be revolutionary in the education world. If we can set up the school within a school, it would cater for those children who might otherwise end up wandering the streets."

HOW SCHOOLS MOVED ON FROM TROUBLED TIMES

PAUL HILL, head of Hagley Roman Catholic High School in Kidderminster, which lost 12 pupils and a teacher in a minibus crash on the M40 in November 1993, said: "Nerves are still not as settled as I thought they were."

"We had a memorial mass in November and I was surprised at the numbers of people who came. We normally get 150 to 200 children but on this particular day there were nearly 400, and several of the bereaved parents. There is still very deep hurt there, especially among close friends."

"The children were remarkable in their ability to recover. Several staff had four or five empty chairs in their classroom, so we had to reorganise the classes. But it would be fair to say that some members of staff have

not recovered and two or three took early retirement, hastened by their experience." JOHN YOUNG, principal of Sullivan Upper School, Holywood, Co Down, where a man with a flame-thrower badly injured three pupils during an A-level examination in June 1994, said: "We don't mark our incident in any sense because it ceases to have meaning and it fades from memory. All the time you have to get the right balance between moving the school on and paying proper attention to the memory of the incident."

"The best way is to signify it by naming a building or a garden, which is what they did at Dunblane. I think the head of St George's is absolutely right not to remember the day, but you have to remember the man, at least in the short term."

Traffic is the key to Blairs' choice of school

BY VALERIE ELLIOTT AND JOHN O'LEARY

THE rigours of London's rush-hour traffic are expected to determine the future schooling of the Prime Minister's daughter, Kathryn.

Tony and Cherie Blair are keen that the next school for Kathryn, who will soon be ten, should fit in with the school run for their sons, Nicholas and Euan, who attend the Roman Catholic London Oratory School, in Fulham.

They are understood to have narrowed the choice of secondary school to either Lady Margaret, in Parsons Green, Fulham, a voluntary-aided Church of England school, or the Sion Manning Roman Catholic school in Ladbrooke Grove. Another contender, the Roman Catholic Sacred Heart High, in Hammersmith, has apparently been ruled out.

The choice of Lady Margaret would be more controversial for the Blairs because, although Mr Blair is an Anglican, his children are being brought up in the Catholic faith. But the school is a popular choice for parents with children at the London Oratory. In spite of their religious differences, the schools are similar in ethos. Both feature among the top 40 comprehensives in England at GCSE and Lady Margaret was described by inspectors as "a very good school which has great strengths".

The more interesting choice would be Sion Manning, which has been turned around in the past three years by a dynamic new headmistress, Patrice Canavan. The Blairs have visited the school and met Ms Canavan. Although fewer than half of last year's GCSE candidates achieved five high-grade passes, the proportion has almost doubled since 1994.

The Blairs have plenty of time to make up their minds. Kathryn is not likely to move schools until September next year. If John Prescott's transport strategy bites into school runs in London, the Blairs might opt for Grey Coat Hospital school, a brisk walk from Downing Street towards Victoria.



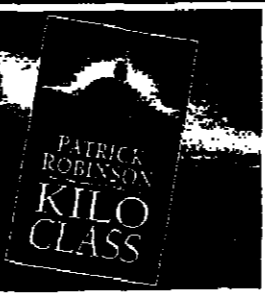
Philip Lawrence: killed outside school gates

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VALERIE GROVE MEETS: MALCOLM TURNBULL

You can keep Dame Edna

When I last met Malcolm Turnbull, ten years ago, he had just pulled off the triumph of his legal career in the Spycatcher trial. He had located Peter Wright - "cadaverous and stony broke" - in the Tasmanian boondocks, put him in court in his bushman's hat and taken on the British Establishment, bringing with a Down-Under clanking quite alien to English court-room courtesies. (To Sir John Bailey, the Treasury solicitor, the then 34-year-old Turnbull snarled: "I'd get to work covering my backside if I were you, Bailey. You'll wish you'd never heard of Peter Wright by the time I'm finished with you.")

Confrontational and fearless, Turnbull was obviously going to cut a swath through the last fester of colonialism; and he has. He steered the Australian Republican Movement to victory in the constitutional convention in Canberra last month. I met Turnbull in his office in one of Sydney's gleaming towers, with its vertiginous view of the shimmering harbour 48 floors below. Outside it was 36C, but in the air-conditioned interior Turnbull snuffled with flu, aftermath of all the frantic excitement.

In the weeks since the republic became a millennial cert, an undercurrent of feeling has surfaced within his movement. One colleague, Mark Day, suggested in print that Turnbull should step down and make way for a "less abrasive" figurehead, such as the more personable and even richer Janet Holmes a Court. Another delegate called Turnbull's faction "the Turnbullies". The lawyer is a target for such attacks, as one columnist pointed out, because he is smart and successful in a land where "comfortable, unthreatening mediocrity is the norm".

He does put people's backs up, but even his critics acknowledge that, without his drive and his money - he has put about £500,000 of his own into the cause - the convention victory might never have been won. He acted in a (surprisingly) consensual and conciliatory manner, brokering the warring factions as he drafted a bipartisan model constitution on his laptop.

Assuming that next year's referendum achieves its majority, the obvious date for the start of the republic would be January 1, 2001, were it not for the Sydney Olympics in September 2000. Turnbull believes there will be an overwhelming feeling that the Olympics should be opened by the new Australian president, rather than the Queen. "And I think the Queen's own attitude would be: 'Let them get on with it.' It's not something to dawdle over."

When Turnbull first wrote a youthful polemic on republicanism 20 years ago, the withering rhombus city's "venereal disappearance" seemed too certain to require a push. Then he watched the Australia Day celebrations in biennial year, 1983. "It struck me as so bizarre. Here we were, a young, confident country, celebrating 200 years since the settlement at Sydney Cove with a great deal to be



Malcolm Turnbull, in his office in Sydney, is said to be a target for criticism because he is smart and successful in a land of comfortable, unthreatening mediocrity

proud of. But we couldn't do it without importing this perfectly pleasant young Englishman as guest of honour. Every public event was presided over by a member of the Royal Family. Was there no Australian who could handle a pair of scissors? Even Charles himself appeared embarrassed to be there.

Turnbull belongs to the Australian elite - "the only families who have been here longer than ours are the indigenous Australians". His father, Bruce Bligh Turnbull, was descended from the Scottish non-conformists who settled in 1802 and built the Ebenezer chapel, the oldest in Australia. The name of Captain Bligh, first Governor of New South Wales, was adopted by many settlers: Turnbull's own son, now 15, is Alexander Bligh Turnbull. His maternal grandparents arrived from England in the 1920s with the cast of *Showboat* and settled in Melbourne. His mother, the handsome Coral Lansbury, who died in 1991, was great-niece of the Labour leader George Lansbury and cousin of the actress, Angela. The square-jawed resemblance is striking.

Coral wrote once about her son that he was already argumentative and "a bundle of demonic energy" at kindergarten. "My mother was a writer of fiction," he pointed out,

"and spent her life embellishing and embroidering." When she left for the United States with her new husband, and became professor of English at Rutgers University, Turnbull stayed with his adored father. "And not only did she chuff off, but sold off the family home, taking half the proceeds and most of the furniture. And my father never once said a bad word about her." Turnbull was still at Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship when he married Lucy, daughter of Thomas Hughes, the popular former Attorney-General of Australia. His wife - lawyer, businesswoman, doer of good works - has just finished a biography of the city of Sydney. At Brasenose, Turnbull roved for the college and debated at the Union. There he was spotted by Harry Evans, who told him to chuck the law - "it's lucrative, but boring" - and gave him a job on *The Sunday Times*. Alas, it was during the year the shutdown, 1979-80, and not a word of Turnbull's appeared.

When Bruce Turnbull was killed in an air crash, his son inherited his first million and founded an investment bank with Gough Whitlam's son, Nick. Turnbull & Partners was swallowed up last summer by Goldman Sachs, of which Turnbull is a managing director and of whose Australian arm he is now chairman. He does not seek to be a presidential candidate himself. Australia's head of state should, he feels, be older. Besides, who ever takes on the role of constitutional umpire in times of crisis has to exercise his discretion judiciously and impartially. "I might behave with total objectivity. But it's naive to suppose that the opposition would regard me as acting impartially. You are asking people to suspend their normal political cynicism."

Remember Sir John Kerr's sacking of Gough Whitlam in 1975. He behaved partially, there's no question of that. Kerr did a great deal of damage to the office. Everyone's very aware that this is a role where the straightest of straight bats has to be played. How much does the rest of the world care? The constitutional

affairs of any country are by and large of interest only to its citizens, but I've yet to find a Brit who takes the view that this is an affront to the crimson ties of kinship. The British entirely understand that it's not in any sense anti-British.

Turnbull was born too late to witness the young Queen's triumphant Australian tour of 1954, but he is well aware of the residual respect and affection for her. "There are many more Elizabeths than monarchists in Australia today. If the Queen were to die," he added, "the support for a republic would be overwhelming."

He should not, he said, regard the views of famous Australian expatriates as typical. "Clive James and Barry Humphries are irrelevant anachronisms, relics of the time when anyone with talent saw London as the centre of the civilised world and Australia as a mere outpost. My generation - and I'm not a boy any more, I'm 43 - never regarded London as anything but the centre of the UK. Barry Humphries has made his living from caricaturing and denigrating his own country in a pretty gross and sickening way." Hillary, though, I rejoice. Can't Turnbull see the joke? "Well, the

Poms like it," he said grimly. "I think he's done a lot of harm to Australia." Ah! A glimpse of Turnbull's abrasiveness. He is irritated by urban myths about himself and has "collected, several times" for stunts on his reputation.

"The Sydney media is fascinated by personalities, and they find mine very fascinating. The image of Malcolm Turnbull is a caricature, like a cartoon exaggerating Prince Charles's ears."

So why did he declare himself upset by the recent criticism? "I wanted to make a point. Not that I want people to be nice about me. But a political struggle is all about work. It requires time, dedication and having the right resources." The day I left for Australia, the front page headline of the *London Evening Standard* was "Margaret lies home tonight". In the immigrant-filled city of Sydney, concern for any HRH seemed ludicrously irrelevant. Among the straw-hatted ladies of Adelaide, one could more easily detect avistatic links with Empire. But these weaken with each passing year. As Turnbull said in his book, *The Reluctant Republic*: "Australia is not a giant caravan park into which we have pulled our vans to stay awhile, always harking back to other lands and other homes."



Showman proves a shade too dazzling

RECITAL

Evgeny Kissin Festival Hall

It is not just Evgeny Kissin and his mother who view him as the new Vladimir Horowitz. This former child prodigy has a phenomenal following as the crowd which packed the Festival Hall on Thursday testified. They would have been there whatever he performed or indeed, when bookings opened for this concert, his only London recital this season, the programme had yet to be announced.

Happily, the Russian pianist played one of his strongest cards, virtuoso Liszt, giving a brilliant account of the Sonata in B minor. Predictably, the shortish programme was followed by the now-familiar ritual in which Kissin marches off and on, delivering a series of dazzling but shallow encores. He knows so many showpieces he could give an entire recital of encores, but unfortunately they represent the most worrying side of his extraordinary musical personality.

At least the Liszt Sonata brought out the best in him, calling as it does for a technique like his which defies the laws of nature. Being able to clear all the technical hurdles left Kissin free to concentrate on the work's complex structure, and from the first note to the last he shaped a mighty arc of sound. Within this coherent whole he found much detail, but though he played the most delicate passages with astonishing lightness, he seemed less concerned with real beauty of pianistic tone: it was not only in the thrilling bravura passages that the sound tended to be metallic.

Still, while this was almost worthy of comparison with Horowitz, his Beethoven was not on the same level. It lacked the spirituality to be found in all the composer's later music, not least the Sonata in A. Op 101. Kissin came closest to it in the opening movement, searching music to which he brought improvisatory freedom. But the crisp rhythms of the scherzo were obsessively dotted and double-dotted, and the final fugue had all the clarity of an X-ray. His attack, too, was percussive.

Though again some other pianists might have found more depth in Brahms's Four Pieces, Op 119, this performance was not short of Brahmsian feeling. The *Intermezzo in B minor* had big-sweet pathos, the *Intermezzo in C* had quirkiness and even wit. The *Rhapsodie in E flat* sounded properly majestic, and Kissin showed just why all the pianists though short, belong at the summit of Brahms's output for the piano.

At the keyboard, Kissin is a very direct communicator: one need look no further for an explanation of his huge appeal.

JOHN ALLISON

Advertisement for London Theatre & Concert Breaks. The ad features a large 'London' logo and lists various theatre and concert options with prices. It includes sections for 'Opera & Ballet', 'Comedy', 'Theatres', and 'Entertainments'. Specific listings include 'The Royal Opera', 'The Phantom of the Opera', 'Les Misérables', and 'The Woman in Black'. Prices range from £35 to £104. Contact information for booking is provided at the bottom.

Millennium heading for Earth

Damian Thompson on asteroids and our fin de siècle forebodings

There is nothing like a newspaper billboard for bringing on a sudden attack of apocalyptic panic. It happened to me this week. "Asteroid heading for Earth," said the sign outside Holborn Tube station, and for a second the lunchtime bustle was transformed into a scene from *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*, in which chirpy 1950s Londoners try to put a brave face on the news that the Earth is hurtling towards the Sun. Then I bought a paper and sighed with relief. The asteroid was scheduled for October 26, 2028. Plenty of time for lunch.

For a moment, though, I had been afforded a glimpse of a phenomenon I have spent the past few years studying: prophecies of the end of the world. And I thought: this will really get them going.

Apocalyptic belief is an ineradicable feature of the human landscape: despite centuries of failed prophecies, it is multiplying happily on the fringes of Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and the New Age. To quote three current theories, the world will end when Nostradamus's prophecy of Armageddon is fulfilled in 1999; or when Jewish extremists blow up the Dome of the Rock in 2000; or when the Mayan calendar mysteriously runs out in 2012.

Although no two scenarios agree on the details, one theme recurs with wearying consistency. Nearly all are played out against a backdrop of natural convulsions — earthquakes, freak storms, failed harvests. This is perhaps inevitable: until the nuclear age these cataclysms were the only images on offer. More to the point is the fact that, for at least two millennia, natural disturbances have precipitated ecstatic or doomsday visions of the End.

Earthquakes, for example, rumbled through almost every book of the Bible and, as the notion of "the end of the world" gradually took shape in Jewish cosmology, they were transformed into the instrument of final destruction. They still jolt the apocalyptic imagination like nothing else. It may not have been a coincidence that Aum Shinrikyo unleashed its sarin attack on the Tokyo underground so soon after the Kobe earthquake in January 1995, an event greeted with a chilling, told-you-so glee.

Looking up to the heavens produces subtler forebodings. The most interesting thing about astrology is that it is millenarianism's first cousin. Both systems are descended from an impulse to determine the shape of time from the cycle of the seasons and the movement of the stars.

It took the Christian Church centuries to get away from the idea that the sky held the key to human history. When, in 1000, a comet suddenly appeared, the clergy were more

excited than anyone. "It shone so brightly that its light seemed to fill the greater part of the sky, then it vanished at cock's crow," wrote one monk, adding that it was "the sure sign of some mysterious and terrible event".

Was that comet made more frightening by its conjunction with a millennial anniversary? There is every reason to think so. For the clergy of the day, both the AD calendar and the movement of the heavens corresponded to a preordained plan. Nobody knew how they were synchronised, but nobody doubted that they were propelling mankind towards the terrible events of the Book of Revelation.

And have we succeeded in conquering these anxieties? The Heaven's Gate suicides were precipitated by press coverage of the Hale-Bopp comet — coverage that did not differ much from this week's Press Association report that "Armageddon could be hurtling towards the Earth in the shape of a mile-wide asteroid". But Armageddon has nothing to do with asteroids: it is the titanic battle between armies in the Book of Revelation. How interesting that, as we approach our millennium, we automatically reach out for this image.

For aeons the Church believed the sky held history's key

This asteroid drama lasted less than 24 hours, and you might argue that the humorous tone of the news coverage implies that we never took it seriously. I'm not so sure. No doubt even now apocalyptic believers are busy interpreting the all-clear as evidence of a gigantic conspiracy to hush up the doomsday revelation. But their theories are less interesting than our half-suppressed, apocalyptic imagination.

The eagerness with which the media embraced this story, and the willingness of scientists to depict a desolate, post-asteroid Earth, is indeed tied to the millennium; the fact that the link exists only in our minds does not make it less potent. The asteroid is 30 years off, yet many commentators insisted on forcing it into the context of "pre-millennial tension".

I suspect that the power of this particular story was derived from the sensation of being confronted by something entirely beyond our control. And this is where images of 2000 and of Earth-bound asteroids really begin to resonate with each other. The more ambitious our plans to celebrate the millennium are, the more obvious our powerlessness to delay it, and all the hopes and obligations trailing in its wake, by even a nanosecond. "Millennium heading for Earth," the billboard might say; but this is a collision we cannot escape.

The author's book on the millennium, *The End of Time*, is published by Minerva.



The docks were once the heart of the East End, but now they have been replaced by designer restaurants and warehouse apartments

The last Cockney

Columnist of the Year John Diamond laments the decline of the old East End

The pall of Thames fog drifted fiftily across the steaming mountains of muck and my friend looked across at me with a supercilious smirk. "Home-sick yet?" he said.

It was meant, in its own minute way, as a joke: as a Chelsea boy he knew well enough that the seething, Dickensian East End we were watching on the screen, the Third World refugee camp of a scavenger community recreated for the BBC's current brilliant adaptation of *Our Mutual Friend*, isn't the East End I mean when I go all nostalgic about the land of my fathers.

But if it was a joke, it was one based, as far as my friend is concerned, on a series of unjoking truths about the real East End as a land of oppressive claustrophobia, of crime and ignorance, of Pearly Kings and knees-up-muvvah-brahn, second-hand cars and dodgy boozers, high-rise disasters and timid gentrification.

Columnist of the Year John Diamond laments the decline of the old East End

ing Ich bin ein Eastender sort of way, as if the accident of birth gives them — us — special community qualities. Well, me too. In truth I'm not a complete East End: I was born in Stoke Newington which, in those days, was a borough in its own right and one with a North London postcode at that. And although Stoke Newington was later subsumed into the entirely eastern borough of Hackney, I'm not sure that a birthright can be retrospective. Whatever: I grew up in parts of London with E postcodes — in Shadwell, Stepney and Hackney. For the couple of years we moved out to Essex in my infancy it was to Debden, an overspill estate

The real East End is a land of Pearly Kings and knees-up-muvvah-brahn, second-hand cars and dodgy boozers

Full of families from Shadwell, Stepney and Hackney. It was the move detailed in *Family and Kinship in East London*, the work of urban anthropology which gave the local intelligentsia their mythic status before Pinter and Wesker were around to do the job properly.

I lived in Hackney until I was 16, returned there after I left college, taught there for a few years, left, eventually, when I was 39 and remarried a woman who, with a sense of the right and wrong side of the Park, made moving westwards effectively a condition of betrothal. If anyone knows, I should know what an East End is.

But I don't.

I have a New York-born friend called Reggie Nelsonson who, for much of the year, lives in London, where she writes rather good detective thrillers. She decided to set part of her next work in the East End. Could I, she asked me, jot down a few notes on what an East End actually is, where he lives, what it is which divides him from the dreadful North Londoners, or, worse, the grunting savages south of the river who cluster around Danny Baker for warmth.

I tried. I started in Stepney, which is where my great-grandparents lived when they arrived in Britain, as did my grandparents and parents after

them. But the Jewish East End isn't there any more: it's moved out to the lush suburbs of North London and the residents only ever see the old homelands when they dash in, pressing the central locking system as they cross the North Circular, for emergency supplies of bagels from Brick Lane and Ridley Road.

In its place is Bengali East End, but there wasn't much I could tell Reggie about that. A few years ago I stayed for six weeks or so in my brother's flat in the centre of the area, surrounded by street signs the names of which I'd first heard in stories of family mythology 40 years earlier: Flower and Dean Street, Tenter Ground, Old Montague Street.

The kosher butchers were halal butchers now, the synagogues had had minarets added to them and become mosques, the broken-backed Jewish men who shuffled along Brick Lane had been transformed into broken-backed, shuffling Bengali men.

With the impenetrable language and tinkling music, the pungent, smelling food and the odd clothing, it all felt worryingly alien to me. Precisely as alien, I imagine, as my lot had seemed to the indigenous population then. Or, at least, a population which had achieved indigeneity for, like all dockside areas, two generations settled in the same place counts as a long-established village, and in the old dockside families of Limehouse and Rotherhithe there are still Swedish chemists, Norwegian churches, Chinese restaurants run by descendants of the people to whom Conan Doyle sent Sherlock Holmes to score his optimum.

Who else could I tell her about? The docks? Men who made their living from the smallness of the world but whose imaginations rarely exceeded beyond the parish boundary, men whose lives were run by the union, who passed their jobs from father to son, whose own traditions maintained a strict demarcation between them and other East Enders? Except

that there are no docks now: the East End is no longer a place of arrival and departure.

The docks have gone because the docks have gone, to be replaced by Conran restaurants and warehouse apartments and the headquarters of franchised niche-marketing operations and, yes, newspapers like this one. Most of the local industry has gone with it — either because it's moved to where the docks are, or out of London, or because it's done what British industry has had a disturbing tendency to do over the past couple of decades.

What remains is nothing like the East End I remember from my childhood, and nothing like the East End of Dickens. My Hackney is, as it always was, a slightly run-down inner-city district, no different, once its glamorous riverside neighbour has lost its *raison d'être*, from Moss Side or St Paul's. Parts of the borough have been gentrified in a hopeful sort of way by chancers who imagine that if they paint the front of their houses to look like Georgian "Islington" or Hampstead, they will acquire a status based on something other than the history of geography.

And the rest of the East End, the Alf Garnett docklands backwoods of West Ham and Plaistow, or Poplar, where a voting ward is named "Lansbury" after the socialist leader, or Canning Town and Beckton and the ribbon-developed wastelands leading out to the Ford works at Dagenham? Without the docks and the Isle of Dogs, they are as anonymous as the inner-city hinterlands of any medium-sized city.

So when Reggie writes her book, what will make the East End special? Possibly its new anonymity — always useful in a thriller — which even Dickens might have understood. It means that I'm probably the last generation who will be able to boast of being an East End, or who will want to. But happily, it will also mean the end of that maudlin *boastfulness* by those simpleton historians who believe things were better when the East End was still famous for its crime, and death and slums.

John Diamond's weekly column appears in *The Times Magazine* today.

Simon Jenkins is away.

Movies and shakers

Art cinemas play a cameo role, says Michael Tanner

The idea of Cambridge without its Arts Cinema is something I can only view with horror. Yet it is reported that the Cambridge Arts Theatre which owns the cinema is about to sell the site for redevelopment.

I might as well begin with an admission. While the Cambridge Arts Theatre is just what it always was, catering for a middle-aged, middle-class, middle-brow audience (with an occasional visit from a touring opera company and the odd translation of a Greek play), the Arts Cinema changed. While it used to show, exclusively, art films, it has been getting ever more commercial over the past few years. The last film I saw there was the trashy *One Night Stand*.

Time was when there were arts cinemas dotted throughout Britain, showing highbrow, or at any rate foreign films. But most, like the Cambridge Arts Cinema, have withered into showing what everywhere else was showing, into putting the class stuff on at eleven in the morning or evening. And many, eventually, have closed down.

Obviously those that still linger need money to keep afloat. Cinemas such as the Phoenix in Oxford survive by showing one big budget film a year — *Four Weddings and a Funeral* for instance, which played throughout the summer vacation of the university. Yet the Cambridge Arts Cinema never had that success, partly because people did not expect to go there for that sort of film. Its *raison d'être* was to be different. It specialised in retrospectives, in independent films, in the kind of thing that can only be supported in towns with a university, or big cities such as Bristol or London where the Renoir or ICA, for example, find audiences simply because there are so many people and a few of them are bound to have specialist tastes.

However, it was a mistake of the management of the Cambridge Arts Cinema to think that its identity could be preserved while it enlarged its repertoire. Maybe it was a forgivable mistake. But that does not alter the fact that this quirky cinema became a different place. If the answer is that it had to be, the reply to that is that changing has not worked either.

It is true that the audience could be counted on one's fingers. I am sure there are several reasons for that, among them the prevalence of arty videos and the improvement in quality of presentation of films shown at college film societies, no longer in a corner of a noisy bar on two tacked-together tea-towels. Yet I think that this cinema, and others like it, could have survived, if only they had stuck to their high-minded policies, kept hold of their loyal public. It's a long time since the Cambridge Arts Cinema showed a Fassbinder retrospective, for example, or even screened *The Seventh Seal*, to strike a contemporary and retrospective note.

I know that these directors are not fashionable now. Yet surely it is the job of an arts cinema to bring them back into vogue and keep them there as classics. It is their duty to break the grip of the film distributors and resist the commercial pap that they so often peddle. As with Radio 3, the attempt to combine mass appeal with slots for specialists turns out not to work. If arts cinemas kept to their minority appeal, they might continue to survive; if not, they certainly won't.

The author is a Fellow of Corpus Christi, Cambridge.

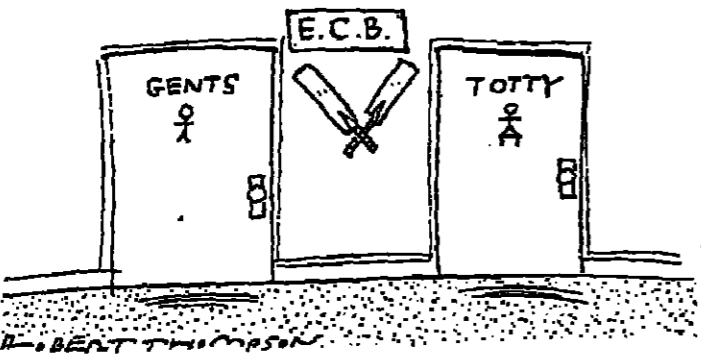
Second chance

IT WAS the biggest snub in clubland for years. Now the Garrick so regrets its humiliating "blackballing" of Jeremy Paxman that the *Newsnight* presenter has been secretly approached. He has been invited to reapply and told that this time his candidature will be viewed more favourably. Edward Faulks, who first proposed the televisual row, confirms that Paxo is being courted: "There would be overwhelming support among the members." Influential sorts believed to be pushing discreetly include the author Brian Masters and tunesmith Sir Tim Rice. His friend and club member John Mortimer says the committee has a chance to redeem itself. "They behaved in a ludicrous way," he tells me. "It is very probable he would immediately be selected."

Paxman's new softer image has gone down well. But the club, still bruised after the battering it received at the time of the blackball, declines to be drawn. Paxman, say friends, will need wooing if he is to reapply. "What's the bloody point?" A word from Lord Chalfont, former



chairman of the Radio Authority, who Paxman's friends blame for his rejection, might help. Lord C denies he is to blame, but says: "I would need lunch to get to know him before supporting him." Still, if the club lets in Mark Knopfler of Dire Straits, why not Jeremy?



THE Queen is in mourning. Two of her favourite corgies, Whisky and Bramley, have died. Her Majesty has buried them in her pet cemetery in Sandringham. Condolences from *Diary Towers*.

Prince petal

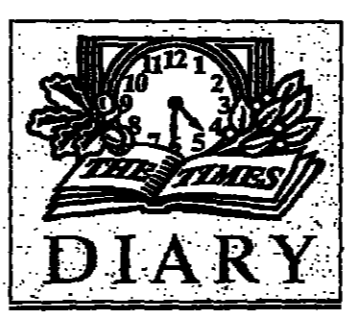
THE Prince of Wales is seriously considering adding some much-needed class to the Chelsea Flower Show — the annual riot of colourful blooms and gnomes that has been overpopulated by ex-Prime Ministers and models in recent years.

The Prince's project, entitled "Impressions of Highgrove", will chart the progress of his garden from its humble, windswept beginnings in 1981 to its magnificence today. A self-confessed beginner who has never been to the show, the Prince was inspired by Wim Sackville-West's horticultural marvels at Sissinghurst in Kent. He also sought advice from Sir Roy Strong on topiary, Rosemary Verey on cottage gardens, and the Marchioness of Salisbury, who helped to design the sundial garden.

GOOD taste. Zolamerica Ortega, the 25-year-old daughter of the grim former Nicaraguan President, is changing her surname. "I do not identify with it for ethical reasons," she explains.

Last act

REVENGE. Michael Wearing, quitting in disgust as the Beeb's head of drama serials, is to appear



in a satirical comedy to be broadcast on BBC2. He makes a cameo appearance in *In The Red*, a tale of politicking in the BBC adapted by Malcolm Bradbury and starring Stephen Fry, Rik Mayall and John Sessions. Wearing, who leaves this month after complaining that "rampant commercialism" has made his job impossible, will play a "philistine Director-General interested only in money". Has anyone told John Birt?

THE perils of staying at the Ritz these days. Mark Strutt, a land agent from Bath, lost his leg at the hotel recently. "My tin leg fell off, as it occasionally does," says Strutt. "I had to be wheeled down St James's Street by the hotel porter wearing his top hat."

Denver is odd. Two years ago, Blair provoked uproar within the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches when he reported that he was taking Communion at St Joan of Arc. "If it causes a problem for the Catholic Church, he will happily refrain from doing so," said an aide. Now No 10 says: "The PM's religion is still a private matter unless he chooses to talk about it."

TO THE chagrin of blazed sorts in Augusta, Tiger Woods, the reigning US Masters champion, has chosen a menu for the pre-tournament dinner that could have been scripted by McDonald's: cheeseburgers, french fries, grilled chicken sandwiches with chocolate milkshake. By an ancient American tradition (from 1912), the champion can decide what the chef rustles up. It should taste little worse than Nick Faldo's. He had cod flown in from Grimsby.

Premier pass

SHOULD Arsenal succeed in acquiring Wembley, it should thank the lobbying skills of its French manager, Arsène Wenger. He has just made his parliamentary debut at a Commons dinner. There his silver passes chimed Betty Boothroyd. He also praised the British game to Sir Bobby Charlton. "I love every moment here," he said. "The atmosphere in the stadiums is the best in the world." He then braved a debate in the Lords dug-out while Lord Simon of Highbury was on his feet — as exciting as a middy bore-draw at Highbury.



RED blood rarer than blue is normally more of a requirement to star in *Baywatch*: the televisual study of marine life. But Gene Lee Nolin, the latest comely mermaid to emerge from the Californian surf, claims to be genetically linked to one of Britain's brightest and smartest figures. The on-screen lifeguard, whose extracurricular activities include producing *The Baywatch Workout*, an exercise videotape based on African tribal dancing, says she is related to Sir Isaac Newton through the maternal line. Trickily, however, Nolin is no mistress of genealogy. "When do you think Isaac Newton was born?" she offered, when I attempted to get to the bottom of the matter. "Late 1600s? 1700s? You see, I don't know any of that." Indeed, Sir Isaac, the godfather of physics, Harold Brookings Baker, director of *Burke's Peerage*, considers Nolin's claim to lack credibility. "The Newton family died out many years ago, but there are some collateral descendants," he says. "She may be a kinsman, but the link is so remote that I would not consider her a proper one. Nolin is probably his 105th cousin, 18 times removed." A shame. Still, I suspect my research is unlikely to jeopardise Nolin's big billing in *Baywatch*. After all, the impressive figures of *Baywatch* babes tend to defy gravity.



GHOSTS AT THE FEAST

Quarrels that could stop European enlargement

If the line that was carved through Europe at Yalta could be erased as rapidly as it was drawn, this week's ceremonial European Conference might have justified the visionary accolades. With more sincerity than historical accuracy, Robin Cook spoke of reviving "the Europe of Handel and Goethe, single, strong, united". Britain, he said, was "determined to show ourselves as partner, ally and advocate" of the case for an enlarged European Union. Greeting the heads of state and government of 25 European countries in the splendour of Lancaster House, Tony Blair warmed to the "remarkable spirit and sense of history in the room".

History was indeed vividly present; but as evident as the ambitions of the European Union's would-be members were the unquiet ghosts of Europe's historical quarrels. Two words—Kosovo and Cyprus—give the task of binding Europe together its true and daunting dimensions. Turkey's boycott of the meeting loomed larger than the summary platitudes about such common, and apolitical, objectives as tackling crime, drugs and environmental degradation.

Mr Cook professed to be "not at all" perturbed by Turkey's refusal to join the gathering. He should have been deeply worried. As he well knows, this event was inspired by the need to sustain some sort of dialogue with Turkey after EU leaders, without any pretence at finesse, dumped its longstanding application in the deep freeze.

The EU's treatment of Turkey could derail the enlargement train. Since the EU's door has been held ajar for undemocratic Slovakia and bankrupt Bulgaria, the Turks are understandably furious at being shut out. It was reasonable for the EU to insist on improved respect for human rights in general, and for Turkey's Kurdish minority in particular. But Turkey should have been told either that improved performance would lead to

membership, or that joining is simply not on the cards. Ankara has reason to object that the EU's stance reeks of hypocrisy.

One consequence is that Turkey is in no mood to help the EU solve the mess it has got itself into over Cyprus. Negotiations open on March 31—but only with the Greek Cypriot Government. If Ankara cannot be persuaded to engineer the participation of the Turkish Cypriots, the EU will be talking to only one of the communities in a country which would be in civil war but for the 24-year-old presence of UN peacekeepers.

Britain's support for including Cyprus in the "first wave" of applicants, which Mr Cook emphasises is even greater under this Government than the last, assumes that this is the fast route to a settlement. But nothing seems less certain; and Turkey, claiming that Cypriot accession breached the 1960 Cyprus treaty guaranteed by Britain, could equally well respond by incorporating the unrecognised Turkish Cypriot republic. Most EU governments are adamant that they will not accept a divided Cyprus. France now wants negotiations put on ice until Cyprus can muster a joint position. Greece threatens that it would then block talks with the five Central Europeans.

France has too strong a case to brush aside with muttering about the inadmissibility of a "Turkish veto". A Greek veto is equally inadmissible. Cyprus must sort out its internal quarrel before negotiations can seriously be engaged. Cyprus should be set aside while Britain pushes harder for cuts in the subsidies to regions and rich farmers within the existing EU, without which enlargement will anyway be only a paper moon. That would be unwelcome to Helmut Kohl. But the real problem that British radicalism could expose is that the hard grind towards a single currency has sapped the EU's enthusiasm for a single Europe.

SELLING SCIENCE

Labovo faces a noisy week in the laboratories

For the next week, even those who have spent a lifetime in the successful avoidance of scientific knowledge are going to find it hard to keep their innocence undefiled. The public understanding of science has been declared a national good, and Science Week is its annual manifestation—a pot-pourri of events, lectures, visits, open days and guided tours dedicated to the proposition that science is not only useful, but fun. Under a Prime Minister to whom the tones of the preacher come all too readily, it may soon be a misdemeanour not to enter into the spirit of the thing. Scientists who once would have cringed with embarrassment to see their life's work vulgarised must adopt a fixed grin and convince themselves it is all for the best. Scientific journalists steeped in the scepticism of the newsroom must accept that their work has redeeming social value.

The prime purpose of the week is to restore excitement to an enterprise that for many young people seems to have lost its lustre. The world is shaped by science and technology, but most of us are spectators rather than participants. The implicit assumption of Science Week and other similar events, is that the more people who can be encouraged to take an interest in science, or even to choose a scientific career, the better. The first part of this proposition is self-evident: the second is not.

The truth is that Britain does not do too badly in recruiting children to science courses, at school or university. Our record is no worse than that of other advanced countries. Where the difference lies is what they do with the qualifications when they have acquired them. In the US, 80 per cent of science and engineering graduates go on to a career related directly to their degrees; in Britain only 50 per cent do so. The gap lies not in recruiting people to science courses, but employing them when they graduate.

Only in aerospace and pharmaceuticals do British companies invest as much in research and development as their rivals abroad. The bulk of the engineering industry remains a research-free zone, despite years of hand-wringing and exhortation.

According to many in the laboratories, the answer lies in spending more public money. The pressure group Save British Science has argued the point eloquently for years, but the change of Government has so far proved a disappointment. From Mr Blair there is no sign of the big "step-change" in science spending which would satisfy their aspirations. Yesterday the Prime Minister celebrated the launch of Science Week economically enough, with a visit to the Science Museum and the "relaunch" of an advisory committee set up by the Conservatives. Science has never lacked committees: it has too many of them, charged with the hopeless task of trying to satisfy too many supplicants, on resources too small to meet even half their demands.

Higher public spending would be an answer, of sorts. It would bring supply and demand into better balance, but whether it would address the real problem is more questionable. In the past, Britain devoted a greater proportion of public expenditure to research and development than it does today, and was rewarded by a greater proportion of Nobel prizes. But the underlying problems remained. Research carried out in the public sector failed to reach markets or to stir industry into matching efforts.

The lesson Science Week should seek to teach is not that science is fun, though it may be, but that it is the only way to keep Britain competitive in the world. We need more scientific entrepreneurs, not more researchers preying on the public purse. Science must learn to be more self-supporting; then it would be more deserving of support.

DIRTY LONDON

Where the grime is as old as the Underground

More than 13 million overseas visitors a year come to London. Despite its climate, cuisine and the strength of sterling, Britain is now one of the top tourist destinations in the world, and the past year has seen another remarkable surge in numbers. More than half these visitors come first to the capital, and many never venture further. If they read the latest edition of the Lonely Planet guide, they would probably stay at home. The back-packer's bible has sent thousands of adventurous tourists to war-torn Beirut or polluted Jakarta, but considers London dirty, expensive and a "victim of its own hype".

For all the protests of tourist promotion boards and guardians of civic pride, many of the criticisms hit home. The Underground, as even its operators admit, is crowded, fetid and in desperate need of cash. Pedestrians are choked with traffic fumes, and gourmets are choked with restaurant bills. All this, with the size of restaurant bills, all this, perhaps, is the inevitable concomitant of a thriving tourist industry. Paris, too, has its eternal kitsch and even the Eternal City has eternal traffic jams. But London surpasses all other capitals in one dismal respect: it is filthy.

Litter is the curse of the throwaway society, and tourist detritus is peculiarly noxious: fast-food containers, beer bottles, film boxes, chewing gum and cheap tin cans. The Mall, Parliament Square and other centres of ceremony and pageant are kept tolerably clean. But venture one short hop

on the tourist bus to the south or east and what filth is to be found: sodden paper blocks the drains, cigarette butts carpet the pavement, grime coats the street furniture.

The contrast with continental Europe is depressing. With the exception, perhaps, of Brussels, few other big cities are as dirty. German and Swiss towns have a pristine orderliness that caricatures national stereotypes. The Dutch and the Danes may have their hippies, but the alternative society still drops its rubbish in the litter bin and parks its eyes in the racks. Even wilder Latin temperaments do not leave their environs as dishevelled as the storm-tossed locks of their opera stars. Only the English, it seems, underline their approach to washing with a parsimonious belief that the only water the streets and pavements need is the gentle drizzle, from heaven. Edinburgh, by contrast, looks as rawly scrubbed as the cheeks of its burghers in winter.

The dirt in and around England's cities is made worse by the inability of workmen to lay paving stones flat or tidy the fresh-tarred humps of street repairs. A German pavement stretches smoothly from shop to kerb; the typical street in Croydon or Crewe is a thing of shreds and patches, a stumbling block to catch the unwary and their refuse. In London the stonework may be golden; but the tourist treads historic trails through grime that has lain there as long.

Long-term aim on transport urged

From the Director of Public Policy, RAC, and others

Sir, The Government is now finalising its White Paper on an integrated transport policy. The recent consultation process has shown that there is genuine consensus about both the future direction of policy and the measures needed to improve access, while reducing congestion and pollution. There is growing understanding of the need to provide acceptable high-quality alternatives to the car in order to reduce unsustainably high levels of car dependence.

This encouraging prospect will be undermined unless there is also a long-term investment strategy for transport, ensuring that funding is available and that the policy becomes credible. Given that large parts of the transport sector are now in private ownership, significant funding is already forthcoming; more can be expected from private investment or through private/public partnerships, provided that the necessary framework is in place to give investors confidence.

Given additional revenues from the commitment to increase fuel duty by 6 per cent per annum above inflation there is no reason why the necessary public finance should not be available. If, as it should, the White Paper allows local government to generate new revenue streams from transport, these must be dedicated to sustainable transport purposes, and the requirement on the Exchequer will diminish even further.

As we await the most important shifts in transport policies for two decades, all of our organisations regard a parallel long-term investment strategy as fundamental to their success. The two are inseparable.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID WORSKETT,
Director of Public Policy, RAC.

MARK DOWD,
Chair, Transport Committee,
Local Government Association.

STEPHEN JOSEPH,
Director, Transport 2000.
DAVID MORPHEE,
Director General, The Railway Forum.
STEVEN NORRIS,
Director General,
Road Haulage Association.
ADAIK TURNER,
Director General, CBI,
RAC Motoring Services,
14 Cockspar Street, SW15 5BL,
March 10.

Scottish nationalism

From Mr Stan Smith

Sir, It was astonishing that Mr Donald Dewar, who sees himself as First Minister in the new Scottish parliament, should claim at the Scottish Labour conference in Perth that the nationalists, meaning the Scottish nationalists, would try to "abuse and manipulate" the parliament and that "they will see it as a mechanism for breaking up Britain..." (report, early editions, March 9; see also report, March 11).

These are the very same Scottish nationalists with whom he stood shoulder to shoulder during the debate prior to the referendum. In those days Mr Dewar was anxious to get the 22 per cent Scottish nationalist vote in favour of his plan for a Scottish parliament.

In fairness the SNP made it quite clear that they looked upon the setting up of a Scottish parliament as a stepping-stone to a fully independent Scotland. It seems that Mr Dewar now admits that if the Scottish nationalists are able to hijack the Scottish parliament it will hasten the break-up of the United Kingdom.

Yours faithfully,
STAN SMITH,
19 Cleaside Avenue,
South Shields,
Tyne and Wear NE34 8DQ,
March 11.

Tax on the land

From Mr Robert Young

Sir, The "land tax" issue comes and goes (letter, March 11). It is curious that something so fundamental to a country's wellbeing should be so studiously avoided.

Tax work—and the cost of labour becomes so high that employment withers. Tax ingenuity—and the entrepreneurs flee to tax havens. Tax the rental value of the land and the landlord has to release land into use and everyone benefits. Labour gets its wages, the ingenious the rewards for their ingenuity and the landlord is rewarded by prosperity from rising rents. The tax base increases but the need for social services falls. Economic heaven, on earth too.

If we had ignored Newton as we ignore Adam Smith, where would we be?

Yours etc,
ROBERT YOUNG,
14 Calabria Road,
Highbury, N5 1JA,
office@ain-think.co.uk,
March 12.

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Letters to the Editor should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number—0171-782 5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Past PMs: believers and doubters

From Dr Michael Brock

Sir, I wonder whether Matthew Parris has correctly interpreted the religious faith of some prewar prime ministers (article, "Blair's leap of faith", March 6; letters, March 10)? There can be no certainty in such things, but five of them classed as only "probably" believers or as "doubtful" in some way, I would redesignate as "believers".

Each governed when a prime minister was expected to attend public worship and to uphold the Established Churches, English and Scottish. The best evidence is therefore actions and statements which were either private or liable to lose votes.

Peel's remarks about science and God at the opening of the Tamworth Library (January 19, 1841) seem to take him from "probably" to "certainly". His severe critic in *The Times* ("Catholics", John Henry Newman) did not think him insincere.

Aberdeen incurred obloquy in trying to prevent the disruption of the Scottish Church, and forbore to rebuild Haddo church. Having taken Britain into the Crimean War, he dis-qualified himself from building a place of worship because he thought that he had, like King David, "made great wars".

Rosebery wrote in his diary: "How I love this simple church and service [at Gastein]. Read prayers all day at home." Salisbury fought to the last in 1870-71 against the "infidelity" which he detected in the Oxford classics course.

A. J. Balfour had "philosophic doubts" about scientific materialism, not about faith. His *Theism and Humanism* was recommended to me by C. S. Lewis.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL BROCK,
Nuffield College, Oxford OX1 1NF,
March 9.

UK economy

From Professor John Chelson

Sir, It could be helpful to the whole of UK society if Anatole Kaletsky and your other influential writers were to recognise and develop the underlying message in the letter (March 6) from my friend Michael Robson, President of the UK Steel Association.

That is, that the manufacturing and service sectors interact and are interdependent. Both are part of a wider system—the UK economy—which cannot maximise its potential as long as the manufacturing and service sectors are regarded as separate.

Policies for overall economic success and greater social harmony should be based on this holistic view rather than "either/or" perspectives.

The fruitless debate about which sector has the greater potential is in part fuelled by a misunderstanding of

opinions of several of the prime ministers mentioned in Matthew Parris's article, may I add a few comments?

Disraeli acknowledged "my Lord and Saviour" in a speech in the House of Commons in 1847, arguing that men of the Jewish religion should be allowed to sit in that House. On the other hand, according to the diaries of his friend Lord Stanley, he occasionally expressed somewhat sceptical opinions about religion in private. Incidentally, his father Isaac, after quarrelling with his synagogue, had his children baptised in the Church of England (Disraeli was 12 at the time), but there is no evidence that Isaac adopted Christianity himself.

Lloyd George, though he appeared publicly as a consistent Baptist, perhaps swithered between periods of belief and doubt. Richard, the 2nd Earl Lloyd-George, seeking to present an unvarnished personal picture (not always very credibly) in *My Father* (published 1960), stated that "my father's religious beliefs fluctuated, and there were periods in his life when he lost faith". However, Lady Olwen Carey Evans, in *Lloyd George was my Father* (1985), described him as a quiet and consistent believer.

Macmillan's interest in religion was more than "theatrical"—if indeed it was theatrical at all. He appears to have held consistently to Anglo-Catholic devotion. Alistair Horne, in the first volume of his official biography (1988), quoted the following statement of this Premier:

Whatever your views happen to be about practical theology, I don't think a nation can live without religion... if you don't pray every night, and if you don't believe in God, and if you don't think you can serve God eventually, you can't solve all these problems and you can't even survive them.

Yours faithfully,
IAN MACHIN
(Professor of British History),
University of Dundee,
Dundee DD1 4HN,
g.i.machin@dundee.ac.uk
March 9.

Indians at war

From Miss Kusoom Vadgama

Sir, The huge sacrifices made by Indian soldiers in two world wars, not forgetting those from other parts of the Empire, remain only a footnote to history: neither factual information nor popular entertainment has considered their immense financial and personal support to be worthy of much mention in textbooks published or theatre dramas and films produced.

In his review of Christopher Somerville's *Our War* (Books, March 12) John Grigg voices the feelings of many who regret the lack of attention paid to the honour and bravery of these soldiers.

Though they fought shoulder to shoulder with the British troops, they remain mere spectators at most war anniversary celebrations. One only needs to ask what the outcome of the wars would have been had they not come to give their all for the freedom of the "mother country".

Faithfully yours,
KUSOOM VADGAMA
(Author, *India in Britain*,
Robert Royce, 1984),
808 Finchley Road,
Temple Fortune, NW11 6XL,
March 12.

House names

From Mrs Elizabeth Rowe Mitchell

Sir, A friend told me not too long ago of a South Coast doctor who named his house "Bedside Manor" (letters, March 4 and 11).

Yours sincerely,
ELIZABETH ROWE MITCHELL,
Kinnross, 31a Roger Beck Way,
Sketty, Swansea, SA2 0UF,
March 13.

Running and the deer

From Professor P. Bateson, FRS

Sir, Dr Stutford (article, *Body and Mind*, March 5) referred to my report to the National Trust on the behavioural and physiological effects on deer of being hunted with hounds.

He went on to speculate that the medical state of the Boston banker who ran a marathon would undoubtedly have persuaded me "that marathon running was institutionalised cruelty and should be banned".

Not so. However, if that banker had been plucked untrained from a sedentary life and forced to run a marathon on pain of death, that would be a different matter.

Yours faithfully,
PATRICK BATESON,
The Provost's Lodge,
King's College,
Cambridge CB2 1ST,
March 5.

Rocking the boat

From Mr Walter M. Houser

Sir, I agree almost wholly with your comments on the warning support from rock stars for the Labour Government (leading article, "The NME within", March 12).

Mr Blair should (and I am sure he will) ignore these self-important pop stars, whose need to go public with their half-baked political opinions is something of a mystery.

The only phrase I disagree with is "Rock stars need to be rebels." Not so. All the rock stars need to do is to entertain that portion of the public that finds them entertaining. Thereafter they should return to their homes and enjoy the vast wealth which some of them have managed to accumulate as a result of that public's untiring quest for mediocrity.

Yours faithfully,
WALTER HOUSER,
4 Chandos Street, W1A 3BQ.

Gender bending

From the Reverend Colin Sanders

Sir, You appear to have forgotten (leading article, "Gender benders", March 10) the gender rhymes at the back of Kennedy's *Latin Primer*:
Nouns denoting males in A
Are by meaning masculine,
And masculine is found to be
Hadria the Adriatic Sea.
Thus:
Nauta -ae m. = sailor;
Agricola -ae m. = farmer.

Yours faithfully,
COLIN SANDERS
(Scribe in holy orders),
Little Firs,
41 Bladon Road,
Woodstock, Oxford OX7 1QD,
March 11.

Gender bending

From Mr Ian Rowley

Sir, Without wishing to devalue Prime Minister Jospin's timely bow to International Women's Day, the French noun *victimie* is invariably feminine.

Yours faithfully,
IAN ROWLEY,
315 Woodstock Road,
Oxford OX2 7NY,
March 11.

Running and the deer

From Mrs Lizzie Darbyshire

Sir, Your leader brought to mind a difficulty we experienced whilst living in France.

Following the purchase of a small sculling boat, my husband took it down to the local rowing club at Port Marly, near Versailles. Asked by his French compatriots what name he had given the boat, he proudly replied "Alice"—after our new-born daughter. Consternation and bewilderment ensued. Boats in France are almost invariably masculine.

Vive le bateau, vive la difference!

Yours faithfully,
LIZZIE DARBYSHIRE,
Hutton Mount, Ripon HG4 5DR,
March 10.

Gender bending

From Mr David J. O. Llewellyn

Sir, Were the *Académie française* to lose in their linguistic tussle with *Mesdames les ministres*, could that lead, under European law, to female dons at Oxford and Cambridge becoming known as donnas? And what about fellows?

I remain, yours faithfully,
DAVID J. O. LLEWELLYN,
Erith Farm House,
Bedgebury Forest, Hawkhurst,
Cranbrook, Kent TN18 5AL,
March 11.

Running and the deer

From Mrs Y. Mary Nielsen

Sir, Three facts: there are no street numbers on this stretch of road; it is a well-loved saint of quite exceptional holiness; I certainly am not.

My bank, however, from their headquarters far, far beyond the Tamar, regularly sends out mailshots to:

Mrs Y. Nielsen,
Saint,
1a, Cliff Street.
I do so wish I could believe them.

Yours faithfully,
Y. MARY NIELSEN,
Saint 1a,
Cliff Street, Mevagissey PL26 6QN,
March 11.

Running and the deer

From Mr Roger J. Flavell

Sir, I regularly walk past the touching, if twee, "Ersannine".

Yours sincerely,
ROGER J. FLAVELL,
76 Chelmarsh Avenue,
Castletree, Wolverhampton,
West Midlands WV3 8HX,
March 6.

Running and the deer

From Mr Ahmad Faruque

Sir, My sister has two identical houses in Karachi built one after the other but next to each other.

The first is named "Atlasta House" and the second "Onemore House".

Yours very sincerely,
AHMAD FARUQUE,
B-7 Bath Island Hill,
Karachi 75500,
March 13.

Running and the deer

From Mr Peter K. F. Kluger

Sir, Water on the Moon (letters, March 10)? How long before we read about a hospice ban?

Yours sincerely,
PETER KLUGER,
35 Sherwood Hall,
East End Road, N2 0TA,
March 12.

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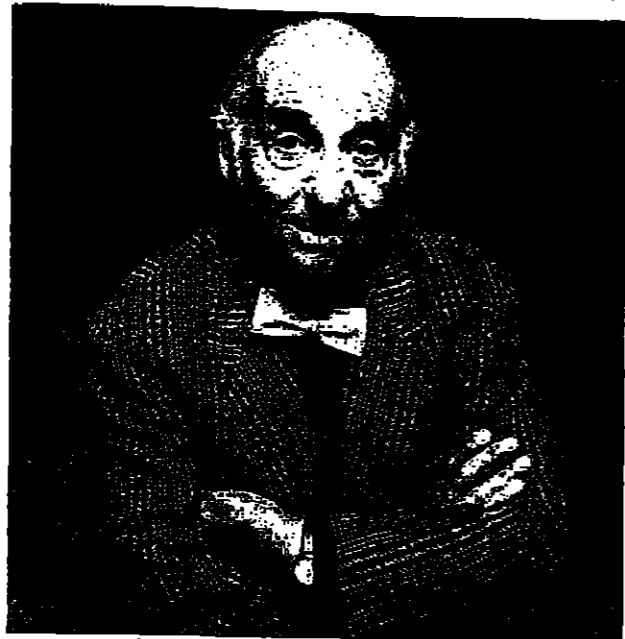
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The first is named "Atlasta House" and the second "Onemore House".

Yours very sincerely,
AH

OBITUARIES

ALBERTO MORROCCO



Alberto Morrocco, OBE, artist, died in Dundee on March 10 aged 80. He was born in Aberdeen on December 14, 1917.

The exuberant use of colour and a fine drawing eye made Alberto Morrocco one of the most sought-after Scottish painters of his generation. His love of the Mediterranean, his fondness for sunlit landscapes and beach scenes, and his indelible Italian ancestry, placed him more within the European tradition than a strictly Scottish school. He liked the formal composition which was the Italian style, and he painted from the heart, "playing colour like music" as one fellow-artist put it. He was a natural portrait painter, who communicated something of his own warmth and humanity to the canvas, however formal the subject. But it was as a teacher that his influence was most widely felt, during a long career as head of the School of Drawing and Painting at Dundee Art College. For 30 years he helped to train a succession of brilliant young students, passing on to them the vital importance of good draughtsmanship. It was a skill which he himself had absorbed through many hours spent drawing the human body, from life studies, antique casts and even the city morgue. By the time he retired in 1983, this



Alberto Morrocco "playing colour like music" in his *Clown as Painter*, a study in oils of 1977

emphasis on the discipline of drawing had become a central part of training policy, not just in Dundee, but at the principal art colleges in Scotland. Alberto Morrocco was one of the legion of Italian Scots whose valuable contribution to Scottish life has long been recognised. There is scarcely a town north of the border that has not benefited from an Italian restaurant or ice-cream shop, set up by immigrants who came to Scotland in the early part of this century to seek a better standard of living. Some have gone on to enrich the intellectual and cultural life of their adopted country. The Morrocco family was typical. Alberto's grandparents were peasants who left their farm near Monte Cassino at the turn of the century and settled in Aberdeen with their children, to run a café and fish-and-chip shop. Alberto himself was brought up in the run-down Causway-end area of Aberdeen, helping out in the shop after school hours. But from an early age he showed a talent for drawing — the first member of the family to have any artistic inclination. At the early age of 14 he was enrolled in the Gray's School of Art where he was regarded as a prodigy, and was lucky enough to be taught by painters such as D. M. Sutherland, Robert Sivell and James Cowie. The influence of their

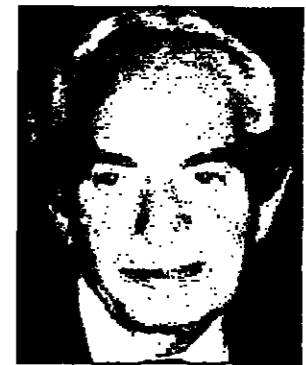
hard-edged draughtsmanship never left him. Two art scholarships allowed the young Morrocco to tour Europe in the late 1930s, and he was there on the eve of the Second World War. On his return he fell victim to Churchill's insistence that suspect aliens should be rounded up, and, since he held dual nationality, he was confined for eight months in Edinburgh Castle, where he shared quarters with another inmate, Tilly Rowland. The two formed a firm friendship. While detained, Morrocco used his artistic skills to paint numbers on helmets and draw realistic pictures of wounds to allow medical orderlies to use them on manoeuvres. By this time he was married, to the painter Vera Mercer, who came down from Aberdeen to be near him. On his release, however, he found himself in more trouble — in addition to his alien status, he was a conscientious objector, and would only serve in a non-combatant role, first in the medical corps, then the education corps. He just missed being sent to North Africa, and was horrified to learn later that his entire unit had been wiped out. After the war he took up part-time teaching in Aberdeen, then was commissioned to provide drawings to illustrate Professor Robert Lockhart's classic *Anatomy of the Human Body*, as important in its time as *Cray's Anatomy* though subsequently eclipsed by it. He spent many hours with his colleagues Gordon Cameron and Donald Stephen, in the local morgue, sketching dead bodies. In 1950 he was appointed head of the School of Drawing and painting at Duncan Jordanstone College (the Dundee College of Art). Gradually he restructured the course, making drawing its essential component. Meanwhile he was himself developing as a painter. Annual trips to Italy produced landscapes and seascapes of great warmth and colour, still lifes, portraits and self-portraits. He painted what he saw but he orchestrated colour with sophistication, using it to convey further depths of meaning, evolving a personal language on the canvas. He elected an associate member of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1952, he became a full member in 1962, exhibiting regularly in various Scottish galleries, and in London at the Thackeray Gallery. At the Academy's summer exhibitions, where his work was always shown, he made a splendid figure in the maroon cloak and ruffled collar which members traditionally wear. He was delighted to be

RALPH SWIMER

Ralph Swimer, bridge player, died on February 28 aged 83. He was born on October 14, 1914.

RALPH SWIMER was a top-class international bridge player, but it was not as a player that he was a principal in the most dramatic event in the bridge world has ever seen. He was the non-playing captain of the British team in the world championship in Buenos Aires in May 1965. After three days' play, Swimer was informed by officials of the World Bridge Federation (WBF) that there was a suspicion that two of the team, Terence Reese and Boris Schapiro (now bridge correspondent of *The Sunday Times*) were cheating, by conveying information about the heart suit through finger signals. Swimer was not an experienced captain, and it was the first time anything remotely resembling the accusation had occurred in world bridge. Perhaps it would have been best for him to say that it was a matter for the authorities to investigate. But, instead, he watched Reese and Schapiro in a later session and as a result gave evidence supporting the allegations. That provoked criticism from bridge pundits, who felt he should have taken no part in the prosecution process. After a meeting of the WBF executive committee the British team forfeited their remaining matches in the championship, and a report of the proceedings was sent to the British Bridge League. The BBL decided that the legal form of the proceedings in Buenos Aires had been unsatisfactory, so they conducted their own inquiry. After 60 sessions over ten months Reese and Schapiro were found not guilty. Swimer had to give evidence and, again, his captaincy was criticised by several of the witnesses. While the BBL inquiry was going on, Ridi Markus, a great player in the women's game and a formidable character on the London bridge scene, wrote scathingly of Swimer in an American bridge magazine, ending with the sentence: "How could I ever play for my country where my captain becomes a party to a conspiracy to convict me of a crime?" That was too rich — he may

have acted unwisely, but Swimer was an honourable man, an innocent unfortunately pitched into the middle of a bridge scandal through no fault of his own. Swimer sued Markus for libel, and the case went on for a week. Markus gave a bravura performance in the witness box, but when the jury retired the betting was very much on Swimer. However, the jury could not reach a verdict, and Swimer did not pursue the matter further. The incident polarised opinion in the bridge world for decades afterwards; the Reese-Schapiro-Markus axis and the Swimer group were never reconciled. Ralph Swimer was born in Poland and came to Britain in the early 1920s. He left school at 14 to help his father in the textile trimming trade. Eventually he took over the business and built a reputation as a trusted and honest businessman. He was a well-dressed man, much liked in the bridge world. He formed a partnership with his lifelong friend Dick Preston, with whom he achieved most of his domestic successes. They won the Masters Pairs five times, a record only bettered by Reese and Schapiro, and won all the main national team events, including the Gold Cup. They also played for England in the home internationals on several occasions. Swimer's best international result was in the inaugural Teams Olympiad in 1960. He played with Jeremy Flint (who was also in the Buenos Aires team, and was *The Times* bridge correspondent from 1980 until his death in 1989) and the British team came second to France. Swimer's wife Minnie died in 1989. He is survived by his son and daughter.



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ROCKIN' SIDNEY



Rockin' Sidney Simien, American musician, died from lung cancer in Lake Charles, Louisiana, on February 25 aged 59. He was born on April 9, 1938.

Rockin' Sidney Simien, American musician, died from lung cancer in Lake Charles, Louisiana, on February 25 aged 59. He was born on April 9, 1938. ALTHOUGH he first started recording in 1959, it was not until 1985 that Rockin' Sidney achieved his moment of fame as the writer and original performer of the infectious dance tune *My Toot Toot*. Covered by a host of artists, including Fats Domino, John Fogerty and Dennis LaSalle, it became a hit on both sides of the Atlantic and earned Sidney, real name Sidney Simien, a Grammy and two W.C. Handy awards. It also crowned a varied career which had seen Simien lead a blues band, become a soul singer, play the organ in

acts of the day. He eventually took over his uncle's band and became known as Rockin' Sidney. An audition for the local Goldband label in 1956 failed to win him a recording contract, but he had better luck three years later when he took an audition tape to Floyd Soileau, who was issuing Cajun records in Ville Platte. He began recording for Soileau's Jin label and had a regional hit in 1962 with *No Good Woman*. A change of image in 1965 led him to don a turban and a sharkskin suit and become Count Rockin' Sidney and his Dukes. The group split up in the early 1970s and Simien became an organist at Louisiana supper clubs and lounges. The popularity of zydeco music and accordion players such as Clifton Chenier in the early 1980s spurred Simien to become an accordion player himself and create what one critic called a "highly individual happy-go-lucky Creole-French based sound encompassing zydeco, cajun, rhythm and blues, soul and country music". With record companies unwilling to sign him, Simien built a recording studio at home and recorded his own album, which proved a strong local seller. Signed to Soileau's new label, *Maison de Soul*, in 1982, Simien continued to record at home and came up with a new album called *My Zydeco Shoes Got The Zydeco Blues*. Buried on side two, track two was a number called *My Toot Toot*. "It was just one of those things I recorded at home in the middle of the night," Simien later said. An infectious and danceable number with an irresistible catchphrase ("Don't mess with my toot toot"), it quickly became a jukebox hit in south Louisiana when it was released as a single; its popularity spread to New Orleans and then through the country as a whole. Although cover versions garnered most of the sales in America and Europe, Simien benefited as the composer and co-publisher of the song. He described the overall experience as an "ultra-fantastic rollercoaster ride". Simien carried on recording in the 1990s and bought a radio station in Lake Charles. At the time of his death he was planning to open a club. He is survived by his wife Carol, four sons and two stepdaughters.

MILESTONES



Leonie Rysanek, soprano, died on March 7 aged 71. She was born on November 14, 1926.

Leonie Rysanek, soprano, died on March 7 aged 71. She was born on November 14, 1926. The popularity of zydeco music and accordion players such as Clifton Chenier in the early 1980s spurred Simien to become an accordion player himself and create what one critic called a "highly individual happy-go-lucky Creole-French based sound encompassing zydeco, cajun, rhythm and blues, soul and country music". With record companies unwilling to sign him, Simien built a recording studio at home and recorded his own album, which proved a strong local seller. Signed to Soileau's new label, *Maison de Soul*, in 1982, Simien continued to record at home and came up with a new album called *My Zydeco Shoes Got The Zydeco Blues*. Buried on side two, track two was a number called *My Toot Toot*. "It was just one of those things I recorded at home in the middle of the night," Simien later said. An infectious and danceable number with an irresistible catchphrase ("Don't mess with my toot toot"), it quickly became a jukebox hit in south Louisiana when it was released as a single; its popularity spread to New Orleans and then through the country as a whole. Although cover versions garnered most of the sales in America and Europe, Simien benefited as the composer and co-publisher of the song. He described the overall experience as an "ultra-fantastic rollercoaster ride". Simien carried on recording in the 1990s and bought a radio station in Lake Charles. At the time of his death he was planning to open a club. He is survived by his wife Carol, four sons and two stepdaughters.

life. He joined the Labour Party and remained a member until 1981, when he transferred his allegiance to the SDP. He was active before the war at the pioneering Peckham Health Centre, a forerunner of the National Health Service. He later took a great interest in penal affairs. Created a life peer by Harold Wilson in 1967, he served in the Northern Ireland Office before being appointed Arts Minister by James Callaghan. A music lover and a notable patron of modern architecture, he was a keen supporter of the arts both in office and in his private life. *Obituary published on March 10.* Sir John Jones, Director-General of M15, 1981-85, died on March 9 aged 75. He was born on February 17, 1923. John Jones was one of the rare members of M15 to reach the top without having had personal experience of counter-espionage. His own background was in domestic counter-subversion. He championed the use of extensive technical resources, including phone taps, to monitor the activities of trade unionists, prominent leftwingers and organisations such as CND. Mrs Thatcher, greatly exercised by "the enemy within", appointed him Director-General in 1981, 26 years after he joined the Security Service. His time in office was marred by the case of Michael Betanney, a middle-ranking M15 officer with a drink problem who in 1983 posted secret documents through a Soviet diplomat's letterbox. Betanney was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment in 1984. Jones was replaced



week. He progressed steadily to better things, culminating in 1952 in his appearance as the calculating deputy to Gary Cooper's beleaguered marshal in *Stanley Kramer's* classic western *High Noon*. By then, McCarthyite anti-communism was gathering strength and Bridges's radical past brought him to the attention of the House Un-American Activities Committee. His career stalled. He returned to Hollywood in *The Rainmaker* with Katharine Hepburn and Burt Lancaster in 1956, and then spent several years playing a diver in a television series called *Sea Hunt*, which paid him \$1 million a year. In his late sixties he discovered a talent for broad comedy, and he may be best remembered as the manic air-traffic controller in *Airplane!* (1980) and *Airplane II* (1982). His sons Beau and Jeff are successful actors. *Obituary published on March 12.*

PERSONAL COLUMN

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Lord Donaldson of Kingsbridge, former Minister for the Arts, died on March 8 aged 90. He was born on October 9, 1907. Jack Donaldson was perhaps an unlikely socialist. The son of the Rev S.A. Donaldson, Master of Magdalen College, Cambridge, and Lady Albinia Donaldson, daughter of the Earl of Buckinghamshire, he was educated at Eton and Cambridge. But the General Strike of 1926 changed his



26 EQUITY PRICES

Steady end to the week

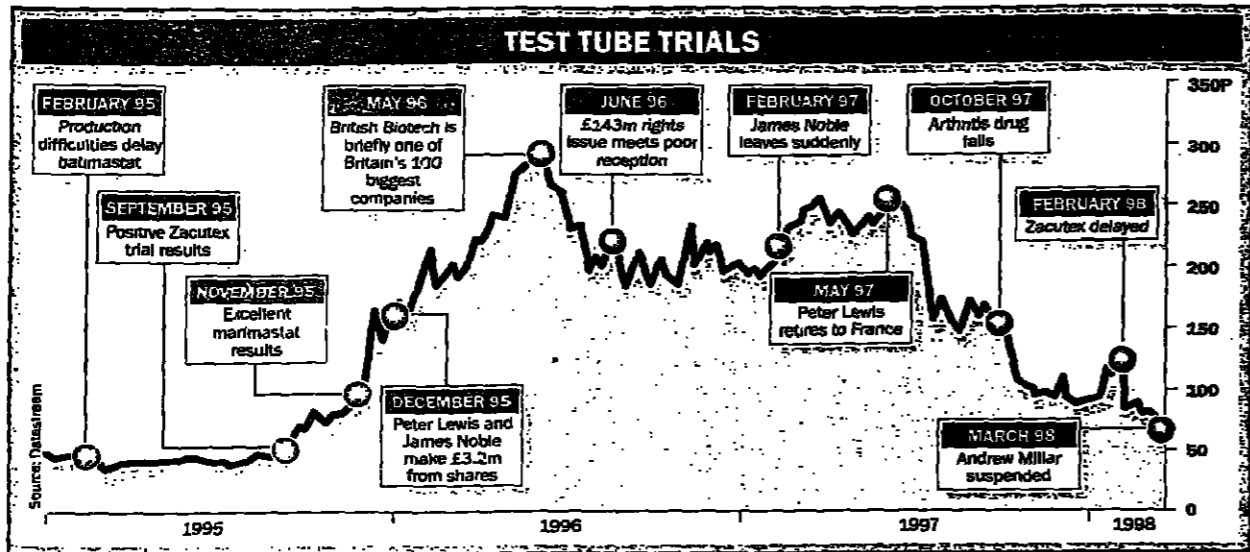
TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

Main financial table with multiple columns and rows, including categories like ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, BANKS, BREWERIES, Pubs & Rest, DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS, FOOD MANUFACTURERS, ELECTRICITY, ELECTRONIC & ELECT, CHEMICALS, CONSTRUCTION, HOUSEHOLD GOODS & TEXT, HEALTHCARE, LEISURE & HOTELS, OIL & GAS, RETAILERS, GENERAL, RETAILERS, FOOD, ALTERNATIVE INV MARKET, and BRITISH FUNDS. Each section lists stock symbols, prices, and changes.

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Suspended British Biotech director calls for changes



By PAUL DURMAN

THE director of clinical research at British Biotech yesterday called for changes in the way the company is managed and in the conduct of its clinical trials.

Andy Miller's concerns are believed to include the amount of power exercised by Keith McCullagh, chief executive of British Biotech, the UK's leading biopharmaceutical group, who was due to return to the UK last night after a business trip to the US.

Dr Miller's comments will increase the pressure on British Biotech's board to provide a full explanation of his suspension. With the Oxford company yet to bring its first product to market, the conduct

of the final stage trials of its cancer and pancreatitis drugs is of critical importance.

British Biotech has said only that it is investigating Dr Miller's alleged breach of company policy — discussing its research with outsiders.

Dr Miller, who was suspended on Wednesday, emphatically rejected the company's suggestion that the actions that led to his suspension stem from his disappointment on missing out on a promotion. He said this was "a trivialisation of some much longer-standing fundamental issues. He challenged the company to prove that he had even applied for the post of development director."

He said: "Our clinical research programmes still have

their considerable original solidity and must continue. However, there are ways in which their management, and that of the company, requires change. I will make this clear as soon as and if this suspension is lifted."

Dr Miller would not be specific about the nature of his "complex and fundamental" concerns. He said: "There are a lot of different things going on. It is a complex pattern. The clinical trials are part of that pattern and how the business runs."

British Biotech says it remains encouraged by the progress of the trials. Some industry experts believe Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, its investment bank advisers, would not have allowed it to

make that statement if there was anything seriously wrong.

One suggestion from industry observers yesterday was that British Biotech is planning to scale back its staff numbers, having recently been forced to delay the launch of Zacutax, its pancreatitis drug.

Over the past two years, British Biotech has suffered the departures of four of the executive directors who took it to the brink of the FTSE 100. The departures include James Noble, finance director, and Peter Lewis, research and development director.

British Biotech said it had nothing to add yesterday.

Commentary, page 29

Tesco sets up network to decide over pay

By FRASER NELSON

TESCO, Britain's largest supermarket group, yesterday launched a shake-up of its industrial relations by establishing a network of "consultation committees" which will replace the annual vote on pay and conditions.

The company has joined forces with Usdaw, its main trade union, to set up more than 600 committees where elected staff representatives meet with their managers every three months to discuss working conditions.

These committees will report to three regional forums, which will include members of Usdaw and meet three times a year. These, in turn, report to a national forum, which will decide the annual pay rise without an employee vote.

The new scheme, which Tesco says will mark a new era in industrial relations, has been given the blessing of the Government, the Trades Union Congress and Usdaw.

John Monks, General Secretary of the TUC, said that poor employers should "come to Tesco and learn that good partnership relations between a union and employer can add value to any company."

Lesley James, Tesco's human resources director, said: "The annual ballot has become a ritualistic sham."

Barings bondholders offered £190m payout

By RICHARD MILES, BANKING CORRESPONDENT

BONDHOLDERS in the collapsed Barings group were yesterday offered £190 million in compensation after more than two years of wrangling with Ernst & Young, the bank's liquidator.

If bondholders approve the proposal from the City Disputes Panel, which has acted as an alternative to the courts in the settlement of legal disputes since 1994, they could receive the money by late summer.

However, hundreds of holders of Barings preference shares with a nominal value of more than £50 million, including many elderly investors and charitable bodies such as Downside, Britain's oldest Roman Catholic public school, will get nothing under the terms of the CDP conciliation plan.

Holdings of bond notes issued in 1994 to the value of \$150 million (£90 million) will fare best. They stand to get back virtually all of their money, less expenses of £3.5 million. This is because most of the funds have been traced to an existing Barings subsidiary.

Investors with equivalent 1986 notes will receive £54 million after expenses, roughly 60 per cent of the initial issue. But holders of £100 million in subordinated debt

will pocket just £23.8 million, less than 24 per cent of their original investment.

The funds for compensation come from multiple sources, including asset recoveries and the auditors. An additional £56.5 million has been contributed by some of the defendants named in the original court case brought by investors, and by other well-wishers.

Prime among the well-wishers is ING Group, the Dutch financial giant that bailed out

Barings. It is understood that ING has contributed at least £10 million, and probably far more, in an effort to see that investors recoup some of their losses. A number of former Barings directors are also believed to have made contributions.

Jonathan Stone, chairman of the Barings bondholders steering group, said the settlement was not as good as he would have wished, given that some investors will receive

less than 25 per cent and none has received interest on their investments since the collapse of Barings. "But one has to be realistic," he said.

Thousands of bondholders lost a total of £275 million when Barings went into administration in February 1995 after the bank was brought to its knees by Nick Leeson, the rogue trader who ran up losses of £800 million on derivatives deals. ING bought the bank a week later for a symbolic £1.



Barings collapsed after Nick Leeson ran up losses of £800 million on derivatives trades

UK imposes digital TV solution on Belgium

By RAYMOND SNOODY, MEDIA EDITOR

BRITAIN has imposed an international plan for the launch of digital terrestrial broadcasting on Belgium to avoid delays caused by the inability of the Belgian authorities to enter negotiations.

Before Britain launches any new broadcasting channels it has to reach agreement with neighbouring countries to avoid any interference with their broadcasts.

But the Belgian authorities have not yet got agreement between the various communities in the country on the shape of digital terrestrial there and have been unable to negotiate with the UK.

However, under provisions of a 1997 international agreement, the UK has been able to impose a solution on Belgium. "We have done it fairly in a very British way," an official of the Radio Communications Agency, the body responsible, said yesterday. The frequencies have been split 50-50.

Without the action Britain's broadcasters, who plan to launch about 30 channels of digital terrestrial television, direct to conventional aerials in the last quarter of this year, would not have been able to broadcast from the Crystal Palace transmitter, which covers the South of England.

Dunloe wins battle for control of Ewart

By RICHARD MILES, BANKING CORRESPONDENT

DUNLOE HOUSE, yesterday finally won its battle for Ewart, a rival Irish property group, bringing an end to a four-month saga. The Takeover Panel intervened on Wednesday preventing Dunloe from making its 81p-per-share offer unconditional after the Ewart board questioned the validity of 1.8 per cent of acceptances. An appeal had been expected to be heard next week. However, Ewart withdrew its complaint yesterday as it was revealed Moyne, the Northern Ireland consortium that recently entered the bidding war, intended to accept Dunloe's offer for its 6 per cent stake.

With Moyne's holding Dunloe will control about 58 per cent of Ewart. Ewart's board and Greig Middleton, its financial adviser, are now recommending shareholders accept Dunloe's offer. Dunloe first launched its takeover bid for Ewart in November last year and was forced to raise its offer for the group twice after Moyne emerged as a white knight bidder.

Delay at Atlantic

SHARES in Atlantic Telecom fell 16p to 164½p after the group postponed an issue of senior debt and blamed the move on adverse conditions in the market. Graham Duncan, chairman, said: "The market for senior discount notes, particularly in the United States, has deteriorated sharply over the last two weeks largely as a result of the number of issues that have come to the market recently. The board decided to postpone rather than subject the company to interest rates which they felt were unacceptably high."

Solvera issues warning

SHARES in Solvera fell 3½p to 12p after the engineering group warned the market that restructuring costs and goodwill write-offs in the year to March 31 would reduce results below market expectations. Solvera said the performance of its documentation operations had been disappointing. However, the company also announced the acquisition of the technical information division of Hunterhill Howard Projects for £1.6 million. It said the deal would address its documentation problems.

Bourne End buys

BOURNE END PROPERTIES yesterday said that it is buying the Hart Shopping Centre at Fleet, Hampshire, from Frogmore. The £18.65 million deal is made up of £17.55 million cash and the rest in shares at 59.65p each. In the market Bourne End shares remained unchanged at 58½p. The price reflects an initial yield of 8.6 per cent on the property which was built in 1990 and houses a Waitrose, three other leading stores, and 45 retail units. Frogmore shares rose 1p to 533½p.

Heineken reassures

HEINEKEN, the Dutch brewing group, allayed recent fears over the Asian and US markets with a 16 per cent rise in 1997 net profits to 761 million guilders (£222 million). Predicting an Asian revival in the medium term, the group also announced plans for a bonus issue of one share for every four held, as well as a 5-for-1 share split. Turnover rose 11 per cent to NLG31.5 billion while operating profit climbed 19 per cent to NLG1.2 billion. The group, whose brands include Murphy's and Amstel, is leaving the dividend unchanged at NLG3.50.

Opec postpones meeting

AN Opec committee meeting scheduled for Monday to discuss the fall in oil prices has been postponed until March 30. The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries called the meeting in an attempt to decide on what action to take to stabilise prices, but there was little positive response from members. Oil prices have fallen 30 per cent since November when Opec ministers decided to increase their output by 10 per cent to 27.5 million barrels per day. Yesterday the benchmark North Sea Brent traded at \$13.07 a barrel.

Whitchurch in black

WHITCHURCH GROUP, the food manufacturing and distribution group, returned to the black last year, earning pre-tax profits of £1.59 million, against losses of £4.28 million in the previous 12 months. Earnings were 5.54p a share, compared with losses of 28.91p previously. The company is returning to the dividend list, with a 1p final. Whitchurch has undergone a wide-ranging restructuring under the chairmanship of Richard Thompson, whose family-controlled investment company rescued the business in late 1996.

North American lenders tighten off-high street grip

By GAVIN LUMSDEN

THE North American dominance of the £25 billion off-high street lending market increased this week.

Kensington Mortgage Company, the trading name of Norland Capital Group and a leading lender to credit-impaired and self-employed borrowers, announced yesterday it had sold a 33 per cent stake to Ocwen Financial Corporation for £27.5 million. Ocwen is a mortgage servicer based in Florida, valued at \$3.1 billion (£1.88 billion).

The deal is believed to have made Martin Finegold, chief executive, a millionaire just four years after he established Kensington to lend to so-called "non-conforming" borrowers.

And the UK subsidiary of Canada Life, the insurer, also announced yesterday it had linked with Jim White's Mortgage Solutions, a broker based in Bournemouth, to launch a £5 million TV advertising service for credit-impaired borrowers.

The insurer's 770-strong salesforce will advise the broker's clients on repayment methods and insurance.

Chris Fleetwood, sales and marketing director of JWSM, said the specialist lending market could double to £5 billion in the next five years as banks and building societies responded to the challenge.

Last week US investment bank Merrill Lynch announced it had set up a £150 million credit facility for Mortgages plc, a new specialist lender. Two weeks ago Residential Finance Corporation, a subsidiary of US car giant General Motors, entered the same market by acquiring the mortgage servicing arm of Birmingham Midshires.

Meanwhile, Money Store, the largest US specialist lender, is due to open seven offices outside London and launch a £5 million TV advertising campaign in May.

FirstGroup vies with Stagecoach

By ADAM JONES

HONG KONG is to be the battlefield for a clash between FirstGroup and Stagecoach, the fast-growing UK transport operators with international ambitions.

Both groups have found themselves local partners to bid for a Hong Kong bus franchise currently held by China Motor Bus and expiring in August.

For FirstGroup, which recently announced a £105 million recommended offer to take full control of the Great Western railway operator, it would be the first foray overseas.

It is teaming up with Hong Kong's New World Development. The joint venture will be 26 per cent owned by FirstGroup if it is successful and the two companies have

pledged to invest £160 million in upgrading the bus services.

Maur Lockhead, the FirstGroup chief executive, said this would be mostly on 500 to 600 new buses, leading to the prospect of big orders for Dennis or Walter Alexander, UK busmakers.

Stagecoach is teaming up with China Bus Company in a 50-50 joint venture giving Stagecoach the overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the buses.

It said there would be no initial fares increase and that the joint venture would invest in 430 new, low-floor buses if successful. Stagecoach owns the Swedibus bus group in Scandinavia but was forced to sell a stake in a bus operator in Malawi, complaining of aggressive competition from minibuses.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

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Create your own modern, stylish and individual living environment and get 20% off selected ranges at Habitat, with To DIY For, an unmissable three-part guide starting in tomorrow's Sunday Times.

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THE TOP 20 WOMEN

A growing number of women have risen to the top of their fields through hard work, to become owner-managers.

The Sunday Times has identified 20 of Britain's most successful and promising entrepreneurs.

Find out who they are tomorrow in Business.

THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS

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Hard ti

NEWS

Dream island couple murdered
A couple who left Britain only five months ago for a dream retirement on the peaceful Greek island of Cephalonia have been found murdered in their villa.

Blair backs embassy's Adams invitation
Tony Blair backed a decision by Britain's Ambassador in Washington to invite Gerry Adams to a "star-studded" lunch at the British Embassy on the eve of St Patrick's Day next week.

Cook warned
Israeli officials said that if Robin Cook visits the site of a controversial Jewish settlement with a senior Palestinian, Benjamin Netanyahu might not see him.

Budget victims
Gordon Brown will disappoint the middle classes in his Budget as he unveils the biggest shake-up of the tax and benefits system.

Dirty London
London is dirty, expensive and a victim of its own hype, according to a backpackers' guidebook.

Word of the century
The word that best tells the tumultuous story of the last century of this millennium is "television".

A handbag!
Karl Lagerfeld unveiled Chanel's latest weapon in the handbag wars - a futuristic moulded plastic design.

Commuter wins right to rollerskate
A City businessman was celebrating after winning a court battle for his right to rollerblade.



The Queen Mother with Andrew Parker Bowles at Sandown before her horse, Braes Of Mar, won the Duke of Gloucester Hunters' Chase. Page 42

NEWS FEATURES

JFK memorabilia: A long-awaited auction was thrown into confusion after federal officials claimed that 14 lots...

OPINION

Ghosts at the feast: If the line carved through Europe at Yalta could be erased as rapidly as it was drawn, the ceremonial European Conference might have justified the visionary accolades...

CRITICISM

John Diamond: What remains is nothing like the East End I remember from my childhood, and nothing like Dickens's East End...

SPORTS

Stores: GUS has snapped up Metromail, adatabase and direct marketing group, for £500 million.

CRICKET

Cricket: A record six-wicket partnership by Ramprakash and Thorpe helped England to a first innings of 403.

LETTERS

Transport: believing Prime Ministers: BBC and Parliament: economy

OBITUARIES

Alberto Morrocco, painter; Ralph Swiner, bridge player; Rockin' Sidney Simien, US musician

WEEKEND MONEY

Investment marketing: missing hunt; Budget hopes; selling 50p coins

WEEKEND

Sleep: How to get the perfect night's rest; Gold Cup; The Irish invade Cheltenham

HEALING

A-Z guide to complementary medicine: schizophrenia in whooping cough

SECTIONS

the times magazine

Liza Minnelli: Hollywood's great survivor... Page 18

Ice storm: Meeting Irina Pantaleva... Page 6

WEEKEND: Sleep: How to get the perfect night's rest... Page 12

HEALING

A-Z guide to complementary medicine: schizophrenia in whooping cough

Vision

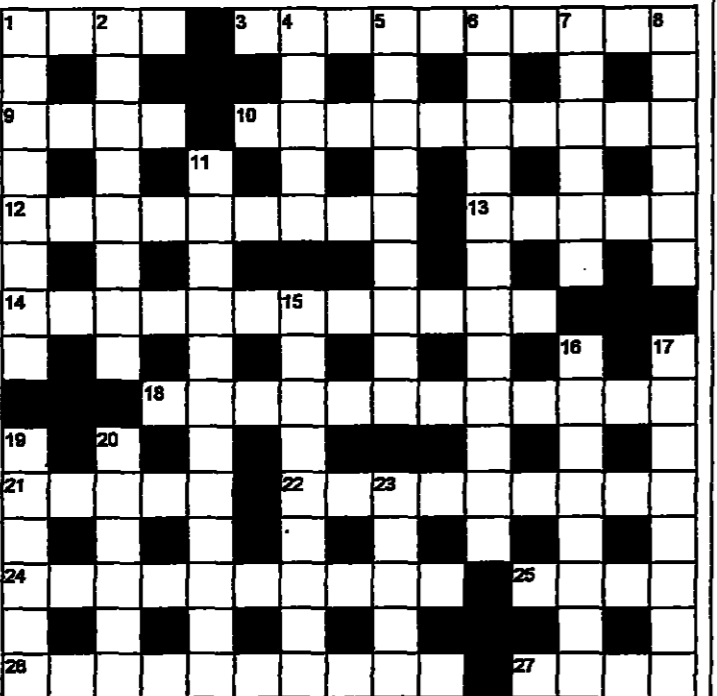
Seven-day radio and television guide

What does the future hold for you?

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,739

A £20 book token will be awarded to the senders of the first five correct solutions opened next Thursday.

Name/Address



- ACROSS: 1 Barrier that doesn't affect one's prospects (2-2). 3 Perversely blame a skit apt to be taken the wrong way (10). 9 Line of soldiers humming (4). 10 Let off dwellings where solid fuel is used (10). 12 Strait-faced girl breaking into old-fashioned language (9). 13 Fancy line in pattern (5). 14 Vehicle seldom free of rattle (12). 18 Athlete keeping intellectual woman (12). 21 Coarse woman including new unconventional words (5). 22 Experience again happiness going round old city (9). 24 Feeling mere pathos, perhaps (10). 25 Car burning at centre of motorway (4). 26 Where a woman can sit after getting up (4-6). 27 Well protected, with artillery backing (4).

Solution to Puzzle No 20733
MURPHY SLAW STUO...
DOORSTEP P M S

LAST WEEK'S WINNERS: W J Sharp, Norwich; D Appleby, London NW3; A Jenkins, Nuneaton, Warwickshire; A Scott, Clydebank, Strathclyde; J A Bettes, Clevedon, Sunderland.

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Car reports by fax

Did your car have a recall?
You may have to see to pull recalls now.

HOURS OF DARKNESS

TODAY: Sun sets 6:18 pm, Moon sets 6:56 am

TOMORROW

Sun sets 6:15 pm, Moon sets 7:19 am

TIDE TABLES

Table with columns for location, AM, HT, PM, HT. Locations include Aberdeen, Amsterdam, Antwerp, etc.

HIGHEST & LOWEST

Yesterday: Highest day temp: Stathlan, Perthshire and Harrow, 13C (55F); lowest day temp: Sella Ness, Shetland, 7C (45F)

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the new material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997

FORECAST

General: Scotland will be very mild but mainly cloudy and breezy with occasional drizzly rain.

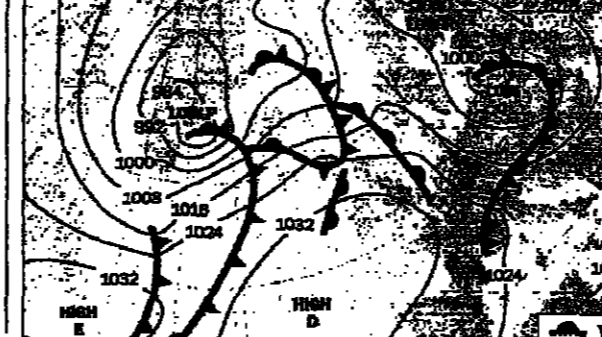
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Table with columns for location, direction, speed, gust. Locations include Aberdeen, Anglesey, Aspinall, etc.

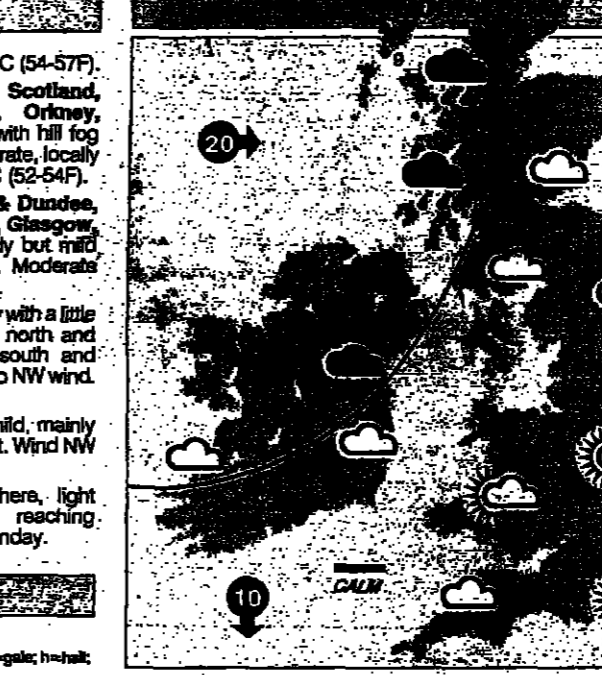
AROUND

Table with columns for location, direction, speed, gust. Locations include Alicante, Almeria, Alexandria, etc.

TEMPERATURES AT MIDNIGHT LOCAL TIME ON THURSDAY



Changes to the chart above from noon: high D will remain slow-moving with little development; high E will drift east; low P will move slowly northward



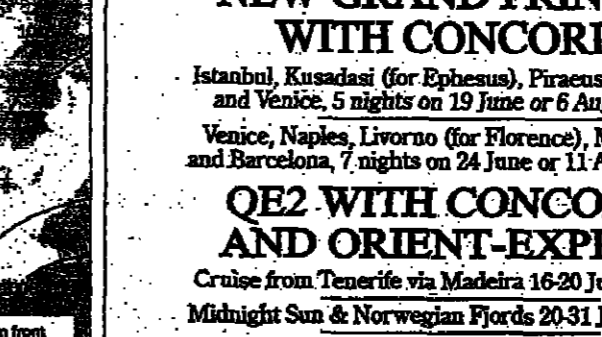
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Table with columns for location, direction, speed, gust. Locations include Aberdeen, Anglesey, Aspinall, etc.

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Table with columns for location, direction, speed, gust. Locations include Alicante, Almeria, Alexandria, etc.

TEMPERATURES AT MIDNIGHT LOCAL TIME ON THURSDAY



Changes to the chart above from noon: high D will remain slow-moving with little development; high E will drift east; low P will move slowly northward

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5 nights in Toronto returning superonic on Concorde. Niagara with helicopter, city tour, luncheon and theatre.

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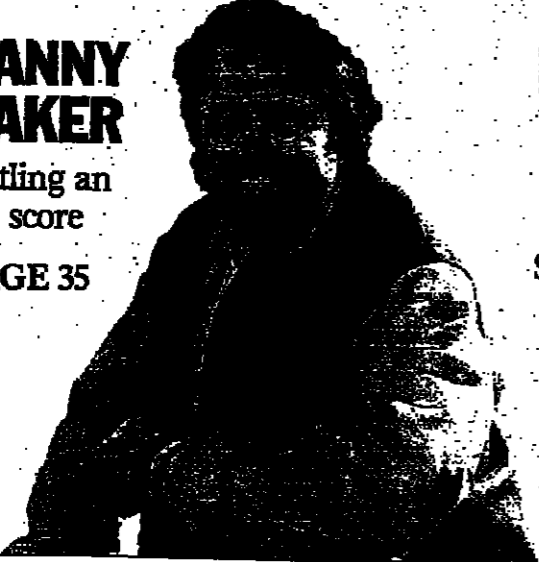
Cruise from Tenerife via Madeira 16-20 June £1,699

Supper up with... THE TIMES... SUPERLATIVE TRAVEL 43, Woodhurst Road, London, W3 6SS

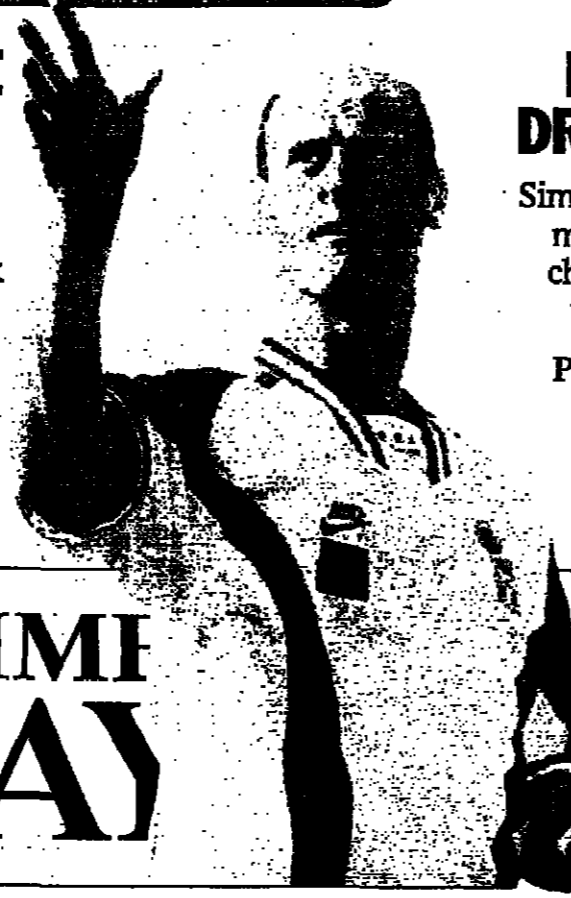
هي من النعم

UNDER THE SKIN OF SPORT

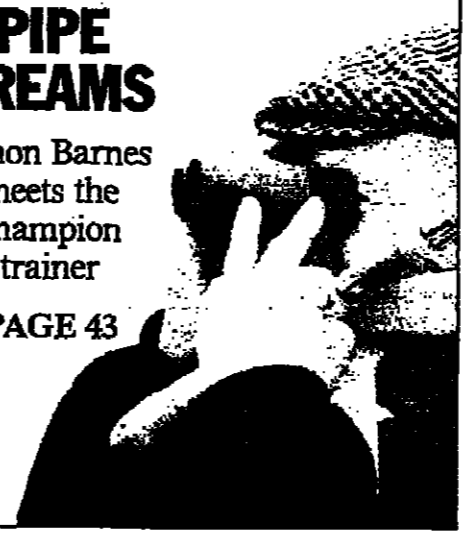
DANNY BAKER
Settling an old score
PAGE 35



PALACE COUP
Lombardo takes over at Selhurst Park
PAGE 35



PIPE DREAMS
Simon Barnes meets the champion trainer
PAGE 43



WEEKEND MONEY
PUT A TIGER IN YOUR BANK
PAGE 56-57



HOW THE BUDGET WILL HIT THE MIDDLE CLASSES
PAGE 64



THE TIME SATURDAY **SPORT** 11 PAGES

14 MARCH 1998

RECORD SIXTH-WICKET STAND FRUSTRATES WEST INDIES

Ramprakash reaps overdue riches

FROM ALAN LEE
CRICKET CORRESPONDENT
IN BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS

THE latest slogan of Barbados tourism is blazed across a banner that flutters above the England dressing-room at Kensington Oval. Its message is "Just beyond your imagination", which appropriately summarised the monumental achievement by two of the players in residence below.

Mark Ramprakash has spent seven years as a Test player, much of it in deepening despair of a maiden century. Graham Thorpe never knew such anguish, for he made a hundred on his England debut, but the reputation of being his country's best player has hung heavy this winter. Yesterday, together, they found their destiny.

Their sixth-wicket partnership of 205 was an England record against West Indies. It kept the fifth Test and the series alive, an implausible prospect 24 hours earlier. It also confirmed the graduation of Ramprakash and the stature of Thorpe, two events of immeasurable significance to England's future.

Thorpe's sixth Test century was terminated at 103 but Ramprakash, who for years has gorged himself at every level but the highest, pushed ever onwards. Before tea, and beyond most imaginations, he passed 150 as England closed in on 400. When he fell for 154, breaking Andrew Sandham's 68-year record for the highest England score on this ground, the ovation was prolonged.



Ramprakash is exuberant after hitting the boundary off McLean that completed his maiden Test century yesterday

and Thorpe share enormous credit. Each faced a mental barrier and conquered it in the team cause. Both should benefit immensely for the experience. Thorpe, who began his innings in serious discomfort from a back spasm, played through the pain and endured 395 minutes, battling with restraint, economy and transparent class. He did not offer a chance, played scarcely a false stroke and retained the selfless awareness to coax and cajole his partner through his vulnerable moments.

so effectively these past few weeks, and drove McLean for four. Ambrose, out of sorts from the other end, bowled a string of no-balls. English anxiety relaxed.

There was the occasional sharp ball from McLean demanding quickness of eye and brain but, soon, West Indies were in cruise control. Walsh bowled wide of off stump, sometimes to a seven-two field, and Lara's baffling reluctance to use spin when the ball had turned a shade on the opening day simply eased England's advance.

Ramprakash stuttered in the 90s, as human nature entitled him to do. On 93 and becalmed, he chanced his arm for the first time and survived, a sliced drive against McLean flying at catchable height backward of point. Now, between balls, he wandered in his crease, taking deep, calming breaths. The crowd was stilled, some barely daring to watch, for this is a player who commands fierce loyalty and affection.

Finally, 20 minutes before lunch and all but 24 hours after his entrance, Ramprakash reached the century, and with a stroke he can remember for its quality as much as its meaning. As McLean

Board support 3
Scoreboard 34
Michael Henderson 34

dropped short, he drove him through extra cover off the back foot for four.

In his 38th Test innings, his 23rd against West Indies, he had material evidence of arriving. Lara was the first to congratulate him and there was a hug from Thorpe, but then strong words too, urging him to refocus.

He did so triumphantly, at first with a smile he could not suppress if he had wished to. Past lunch, and into an afternoon session in which England, suddenly ascendant, subtly increased the tempo.

When the total reached 296, the partnership was worth 165, beating the record set by Tony Greig and Alan Knott, on this ground, in 1974. By then, though, Hooper was bowling and the folly of making him wait was clear. His first over contained a confident shout for leg-before against Thorpe and a rare misjudgment by Ramprakash, who skied an attempted drive just out of reach of Holder at mid-wicket.

Thorpe, his back aching once again, edged with the spin to Lara at slip, but England were further sustained as Headley shared a seventh-wicket stand of 46. Finally, weary after nine hours' batting, Ramprakash drove a return catch to McLean in the second over after tea, his job gloriously done.



Thorpe drives on his way to 103 as England take control

Keeping up with Gazza leads to double trouble

Algeron Gascoigne adjusted his sunglasses and hat, pulled his scarf up to his ears and sat down defeated on a small pile of luggage. His life was intolerable. Where, oh where could he go? As he slunk lower in his coat and eyed the unfamiliar shopping mall, not for the first time he felt like the wandering Jew of ancient tale, eternally denied a place of rest. Separated at birth from his identical twin, Paul, and reared by a nice his identical twin, Paul, and Algeron had old couple in St John's Wood. Algeron had grown up to expect a quiet life, instead of which, driven hither and yon by Gazza's transfer rumours, he had spent his entire miserable adulthood continually uprooting.

Take Birmingham, for example. Up to last October, he was living quite peacefully there, when all at once the cry "Gazza for Villa?" hizzartly went up. Algeron sighed, packed his books and reached for his suitcase. While debate flared briefly about Gazza's hypothe-

tical return to English league football, Algeron tried America, but not for long. "Gazza for US?" the headlines speculated, at which Algeron gave up at once and came home. He settled in an obscure, ugly, and rather gritty part of South London and all went well for a time. But just when he had found an NHS dentist, out of the blue came "Gazza for Palace?", and the wandering Jew was wandering yet again.

Over in Sock Shop, two small boys were eyeing Algeron and pointing. They would be asking him to autograph their copies of *Viz* next. Algeron pulled his scarf higher. Why couldn't Gazza stay put? It wasn't that he disliked or feared his wayward *doppelgänger*. But he had been raised so differently - instead of one friend with five bellies, for example, he had five friends with just one belly each. The worst thing he had ever done on an aircraft was pocket the headphones (he posted them back when he realised). Meanwhile, he played the flute for real and had never knowingly annoyed a Roman Catholic. It was natural, then, that he should resent his resemblance to the best loved, but most recidivist of all in English football and try to keep his distance. Disguise had never worked well. In his attempts to look less like Gazza, Algeron had tried putting on weight, losing weight, putting it on again, affecting crutches and dyeing his hair bright white. Gazza always followed suit, however. It was desperately uncanny.

LYNNE TRUSS

£10 LINE RENTAL AND FREE LOCAL OPTION FOR 3 MONTHS

Advertisement for Vodafone mobile phones. It features a large image of a Nokia 3110 mobile phone. Text includes: "FREE PHILIPS DIGITAL HOME ANSWER PHONE", "FREE LATEST NOKIA 3110 WORTH £9.99", "FREE UP TO £1 WORTH OF CALLS PER MONTH", "FREE PORTABLE HANDS FREE KIT WORTH £45", "FREE LEATHER CARRY CASE IN CAR ADAPTOR WORTH UP TO £15", "FREE NEXT DAY DELIVERY PER SECOND BILLING". At the bottom, it says "vodafone NOKIA 3110 Latest Nokia GSM Phone 2.75 hr talk time/95 hr battery Compact and lightweight". A large number "0800 00 00 77" is prominently displayed.

'Nobody can begrudge him the glory, and there is not a more deserving cricketer'

Sweet dream comes true for Ramprakash

It is often said, and just as often believed, that a man is never more disappointed than when he fulfils a long-held and deeply cherished ambition.

MICHAEL HENDERSON



At Kensington Oval

In his moment of triumph yesterday, a triumph of limitless hope over experience of crippling failure, Ramprakash's smile radiated across Kensington Oval.

Three runs away from the landmark and his pulse was racing. It had to be. Everybody else's was. Six of his previous seven scoring strokes had been singles, so exacting was Lara to offer him that hundred, so determined was he to get there.

family was sitting. The crowd roared with heart-felt appreciation but, mercifully, there was no threat of a pitch invasion. Lara shook his hand warmly and the other fielders clapped along.

Hooper. Between them they had saved their team, making 205 runs for the sixth wicket, cheering a crowd that had paid good money to see it and giving England a chance of winning the game.

Nobody can begrudge him the glory, for it has been a long time coming, and it could not have been visited upon a more deserving cricketer.

It may even strengthen his resolve to remember the dog days, as warriors of old used to summon up mental images of their foes.

If he had thought of himself then as a former Test cricketer, one whose chance had come and gone, he would not have been alone.



Ramprakash plays the ball away on the leg side during his masterful innings yesterday. Photograph: Kieran Doherty

SCOREBOARD FROM BRIDGETOWN

Table with columns for West Indies won toss, ENGLAND: First Innings, BOWLING, WEST INDIES, and SERIES DETAILS.

SPORT IN BRIEF

Cairns takes advantage of late entry

SQUASH: Mark Cairns, the former British champion, who only gained a place after the withdrawal of Jansher Khan with a knee injury, reached the semi-finals of the Austrian Open in Linz yesterday by removing Anthony Hill, the No 6 seed, and Rodney Eyles, the world champion.

SNOKER: Ken Doherty, the world champion, subdued the challenge of Alan McManus to gain a 5-3 victory and a semi-final place against Stephen Hendry in the Thailand Open in Bangkok yesterday.

BOWLS: Scotland's imperious victory in the home international series at Swansea, completed with a 114-100 victory over Wales, was blighted only by their failure to extend their record 17 rink wins into a full 18 when Graham Robertson's four went down to Robert Weale's quartet by two shots.

SKIING: Picabo Street, 26, of the United States, broke her leg in the final women's event of the World Cup season, later called off because of fatigue, at Crans Montana, Switzerland yesterday.

CYCLING: Chris Walker, one of Britain's strongest sprint finishers, returns to racing tomorrow after an eight-month absence at the Grand Prix of Essex in Halstead.

BOXING: Joe Calzaghe has pulled out of his WBO super-middleweight title defence against Juan Carlos Gimenez in Cardiff on March 21 after damaging his wrist while sparring.

Advertisement for 'THE SUNDAY TIMES' magazine featuring 'TO DIY FOR' and 'MAGAZINE' sections with images of a house and a woman.

ATHLETICS Duval to take his chance in National

By David Powell, ATHLETICS CORRESPONDENT. AGAINST their better judgment, Great Britain cross-country officials have provided Spencer Duval with the written permission he needs to take part in the English National at Leeds today and run in the world championships next week.

British athletes wishing to compete in the world championships in Marrakesh were informed that, as a condition of selection, they would not be allowed to contest the National. Officials were concerned that, by logging a long distance through mud, they would be heavy-legged come Morocco.

Duval argued that the National was more attractive and that he needed the race after the cancellation of key fixtures. Norman Brook, Britain's technical director for endurance running, gave in trying to convince him otherwise and Duval received his written authorisation two days ago.

Advertisement for 'NEXT WEEK IN THE TIMES' featuring a photo of Rob Hughes and text about England's young cricketers.

Sports results section including Badminton, Boxing, Cycling, Football, Golf, Snooker, Squash, Tennis, and Bowls.

FOOTBALL SATURDAY

Lonely hearts and the game of two halves

Mark Hodkinson discovers that love and happiness can survive in the turbulent world of football

Imagine the advert. It would hardly sparkle in the lonely hearts column: "Young man, fit and healthy, seeks attractive partner. Must be willing to sacrifice family, friends, career and be prepared to move around the country - possibly abroad - at a moment's notice. The world must revolve around me, and my fabulous career, at all times.

The truth has many guises, of course, and the same person might decide upon a rewrite and sit back while a fleet of Post Office vans arrives at the front door. The new version, with added efficacy, reads: "Professional footballer, wealthy, famous, seeks wife. Form an orderly queue, ladies.

There are approximately 2,500 professional footballers in England. We know a great deal about just a few of them. We know them the way we know stars of pop, film or television. They are sleek people with sleek cars, big on property and investments, big on themselves. Their mobiles ring constantly and, hey, these guys are popular, on the move, busy, busy, immaculate house, beautiful wife.

If this stereotype fits, say, at most, 150 footballers, it amounts to only a small percentage of the total. The rest move among us largely unnoticed, save for the strange hours that they keep and their rather limited wardrobe of trackuits and more trackuits. These footballers share similar wages to supporters, live in similar houses and their lives are flushed with glamour only when the clock strikes three on Saturday.

John Hendrie, the Barnsley striker, is somewhere between the versions of the modern footballer. He has played for seven clubs in a career embracing more than 600 appearances in all four divisions. He is well known but not famous, rich but not wealthy. If his is the typical footballer's story, his wife, Linda, has lived the life typical of a footballer's partner. "It's a good life but you have got to put up with a lot. I am a patient and placid person which has helped. You've not got to moan, you just get on with it and have to be prepared to take a back seat," she said.

The couple met in 1982 when Hendrie was a young professional at Coventry City. Linda Burgess worked as a hairdresser in the town and remembers that he had the "nicest blue eyes" she had ever seen. "He was so shy, he wouldn't even look in the mirror while I was cutting his hair. I had to keep pulling his head up because he was staring down all the time," she said.

The couple married in June 1985 and moved into a terraced house in Leeds. His career took an upswing three years later when he joined Newcastle United. While he was being feted, Linda recalls it as a time of abject misery. "We moved into this detached bungalow in Darras Hall, the snobbiest part of Newcastle. I had two babies, one literally under each arm, and didn't know a soul. The washing was piling up. I didn't know where the nearest shop was. I just hated it and felt like crying," she said.

The mood of despondency was compounded by concern over their newly-born son, Joe, whom doctors felt might have had a blockage in his brain. Joe's condition was transient and Linda eventually settled in

Newcastle, though it was hardly worth the effort. After just one season, Hendrie arrived back in West Yorkshire when he joined Leeds United. Linda was pleased about a return to the region, but Hendrie phoned home within a few weeks of arriving at Leeds. "Wilko [Howard Wilkinson, then the Leeds manager] is not for me," he told her. This was football's vernacular but she understood all too well: they would soon be on the move again.

"I was at home one day and I took a call from Colin Todd," Linda said. "I did not know who he was but I had a feeling he was a manager from somewhere. It was on my mind all day. I knew John was unhappy at Leeds but I didn't want to move house again. Everything was still in boxes from the last move. Joe had lived in five different houses and he wasn't even two years old."

Hendrie agreed to join Todd's Middlesbrough on condition that he could commute to the ground, a round trip of 125 miles. He spent six seasons with them before joining Barnsley two years ago. "I really like Barnsley," Linda said. "It is a down-to-earth place, where people aren't looking at what clothes you're wearing and that kind of thing. The players' wives have their own box at Oakwell and we are looked after really well."

The erratic nature of a footballer's life has been distilled into the past few weeks for the Hendries. There was the elation of goals against Manchester United in the FA Cup, while injury has caused him to miss the quarter-final away to Newcastle and vital league wins against Wimbledon and Aston Villa. "I was so proud of John after the United games," Linda said. "He is not so bad now when he is injured. He used to be highly strung when

he was in his mid-twenties, a right little so and so at times. I knew he would mellow out as he got older."

After a Saturday game, the family has the same routine and it is not infringed upon by football. "John brings home a curry and we close the door and shut out the world. We never judge him or criticise him and the welcome he gets, especially from the younger kids, is always warm. We don't care whether Barnsley have won, lost or drawn."

One national newspaper recently dubbed the liaison between David Beckham and his pop-singing fiancée as the "romance of the decade". When Posh Spice and Posh United have been together 16 years, endured and enjoyed four children and moved countless times, the headlines might not seem quite so absurd. In the meantime, for the Hendries and scores of other journeymen professionals, the epithet is fitting.



Home ties: John and Linda Hendrie have maintained a stable home for their children, from left, Lauren, 11, Jordan, 2, Joe, 9, and Luke, 3, despite football's uncertainties

really upset and angry about it. I was a bit nervous. It's always like that when John goes to a new club, but once they get to know you, most people are chatty and OK."

"The mood of despondency was compounded by concern over their newly-born son, Joe, whom doctors felt might have had a blockage in his brain. Joe's condition was transient and Linda eventually settled in

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Man at work: Hendrie leads the line for Barnsley

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CHANGING TIMES

Star players still languish under curse of the coach

Tactical theory is all very well but it must not inhibit the men on the pitch

The curse of the coach? The latest star to vent his frustration is the Brazilian striker Elber, who recently at last fulfilled his desire to play for his country, albeit in the ill-omened Gold Cup. Originally signed by AC Milan and loaned out to Switzerland, Elber, 25, made his name and scored numerous goals in the Bundesliga for VfB Stuttgart. There, he has come under the iron fist of the Italian manager Giovanni Trapattoni, who has always clung to *catenaccio*.

When a disenchanted Elber was asked how he was expected to play for Bayern, he replied: "As defensive striker I thought Bayern bought me to play the kind of football that made me so good in Stuttgart. I never expected they would want to teach me how to play football. I learnt football in the streets, not at a club. It's only my creativity which makes me unpredictable. When I play simple football, I'm easy to work out."

Paul Gardner, that expert English critic based in New York, also cites the similar case of another Brazilian, the centre forward, Sonny Anderson, bought by Barcelona this season and now playing unhappily in a lone role up front.

The case against coaches is that they will not let well alone, in that both at junior and senior level, they have to justify their existence by imposing their theories on players who do not need them.

Would that it had remained so. But even under Winterbottom, the scheme hardened into an orthodoxy burdened with jargon and claptrap. It reached its nadir in the disastrous years of "long ball" Charlie Hughes, under whose despotic regime at Lancaster Gate, unassisted by a feeble hierarchy, the FA coaching badge became virtually a badge of shame, and fearful harm was done to English football.

Strange to think that when Stanley Rous, then FA secretary, founded the scheme just before the war, its first mentor was the incomparable Jimmy Hogan, architect of the so-called Austria wonder team of the 1930s and the Hungary teams of the same epoch.

Rous said in later years that Hogan found it hard to organise his courses. That was probably because he was a natural, unorthodox, instinctive coach. He learnt what he knew, he said, from Scottish professionals, when playing for Fulham, and his teaching was always based on technique.

"They coach, we don't," Ivan Sharpe, the perceptive



critic and once Olympic champion left winger, wrote in the Thirties. "And, until we do coach - and coach properly - we shall not control the ball and play high-class football. We shall just muddle through."

But, alas, there is coaching and coaching. During the 1988 European championship in West Germany, Glenn Hoddle was sharply criticised for not doing enough work in the England defence. I spoke at the time to two famous

former players, Sandro Mazzola and Fabio Capello, of Italy, both of whom ridiculed the notion, insisting that Hoddle should be left free to do what he did best: create.

Hoddle once told me that he had learnt every trick in his game bar one by the age of 11, practising with a tennis ball in his back garden.

A gifted centre forward of the same era, Duncan McKenzie, fell out as a youngster with the coaches at Nottingham Forest because, when he received the ball, wanting to turn and take on an opponent, they constantly shouted at him to "lay it off".

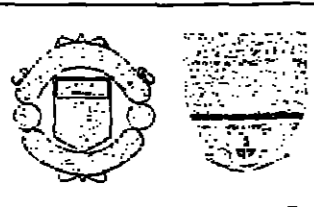
It is surely not without meaning that so many leading players today have come into professional football by the back door, spurned originally by big clubs, making their way up through minor football: thus avoiding the curse of the coach.

Ian Wright was well into his twenties by the time he joined Crystal Palace. Giuseppe Signori, the Italy striker, turned down by Internazionale and ignored by his local club, Atalanta, graduated to Serie A only in his eighth professional season.



Elber has been unhappy since moving to Munich

FOOTBALL SATURDAY



MANCHESTER UNITED v ARSENAL Today, 11.15 (sold out)



Oliver Holt Manchester United's headlong dash towards the FA Cup...

They have three games in hand over United going in to this morning's showdown at Old Trafford...

United, though, do still have the prospect of the return leg of their European Cup quarter-final...

Nicky Butt limped off with an ankle injury during the draw with West Ham United at Upton Park...

Christophe Wreh is likely to keep his place in attack alongside Dennis Bergkamp after his winning goal against Crystal Palace...

MANCHESTER UNITED (4-4-2): P. Scholes, A. Cole, E. Sheeringham, ARSENAL (4-4-2): A. Morrison, L. Dixon, M. Keown, A. Adams, N. Winstanley, R. Partridge, P. Vardy, E. Peart, M. Overmars, C. West, D. Bergkamp. Referee: A. White.

TELEVISION: Today: Live on Sky Sports 1, from 10.30am; Match of the Day, BBC1 10.15pm, extended highlights. PREDICTION: United to win.



ROSS KINNARD / EMPICS

Fist class: Manchester United and Arsenal are just about to lose the plot—and the points—at Old Trafford in 1990



THE RED ISSUE

- It's Man United v Arsenal today, a future evocative of great games, great goals, great players and great punch-ups. Here are some treasured memories from previous meetings...



Russell Kempson Attilio Lombardo and Tomas Brodin? Are you sure, Mr Goldberg?...



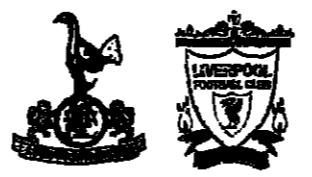
ASTON VILLA v CRYSTAL PALACE Today, 3.0

managers until perhaps Terry Venables (PCE: lots) can be persuaded that the Selhurst Park situation is salvagable...

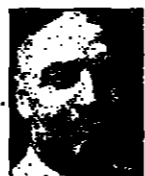
Joachim has tucked in the sixth Aston Villa goal this afternoon. Mind you, Villa are still in a bit of a state, too...

ASTON VILLA (probable): 3-5-2: M. Beal, S. Grayson, T. Taylor, M. Draper, L. Hendrie, A. Wright, S. Collyer, A. Joachim. CRYSTAL PALACE (probable): 3-5-2: K. Miller, V. Vermeir, M. Edwards, D. Tuttle, J. Smith, N. Embrey, J. Fulford, S. Hodges, T. Brodin, B. Dyer, N. Shipperley. Referee: G. Barber.

TELEVISION: Today: Match of the Day, brief highlights. PREDICTION: Villa victory.



TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR v LIVERPOOL Today, 3.0 (sold out)

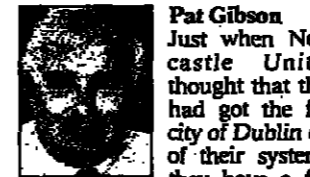


Keith Pike Two teams with contrasting ambitions but a common fear of failure. Which will prove the stronger motivating factor this afternoon...

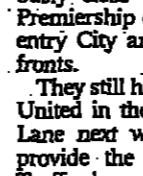
Tottenham Hotspur's dread of relegation or Liverpool's unwillingness to be just another team in the red shadow spreading from Old Trafford and Highbury?

In one camp, the week has been dominated by a public falling-out between manager and high-profile import. But enough of Liverpool's problems. The rift between Gross and Jürgen Klinsmann, centring on David Ginola's role in the side, could hardly be more ill-timed.

TELEVISION: Today: Match of the Day, extended highlights. PREDICTION: Liverpool to win.



NEWCASTLE UNITED v COVENTRY CITY Today, 3.0 (sold out)



Pat Gibson Just when Newcastle United thought that they had got the fair city of Dublin out of their systems, they have a fair player of that ilk...

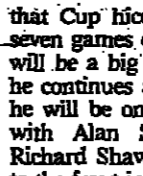
That Cup hiccup they had won seven games on the trot Dublin will be a big influence, whether he continues at the back, where he will be on a collision course with Alan Shearer...

match saying "Give the ball to Franco". Preening, Zola promptly scored his first goal since November. Wise, too, played well on the night, but he is starting a two-match suspension...

TELEVISION: Today: Match of the Day, brief highlights. PREDICTION: Coventry to score a psychological point.



WEST HAM UNITED v CHELSEA Today, 3.0 (sold out)



Peter Robinson Normally, you might think that winning 6-2 is the sign of a team in form, their confidence soaring...

Still, confidence has improved, not least Gianfranco Zola's after Graham Rix, weekday coach and matchday manager, pinned a sign on the wall before the Palace

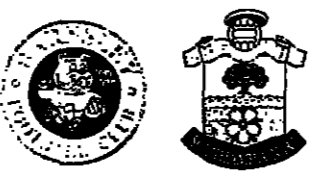
match saying "Give the ball to Franco". Preening, Zola promptly scored his first goal since November. Wise, too, played well on the night, but he is starting a two-match suspension...

TELEVISION: Today: Match of the Day, brief highlights. PREDICTION: Home win, just.

Huckerby, a Newcastle reject and very much aware of it. Keith Gillespie could return for Newcastle, while Nicos Dabizas, the Greece international signed for £1.4 million from Olympiakos during the week...



Richard Hobson Oakwell plays host to two sides enjoying a resurgence in form this afternoon. Southampton have won their past three games in the FA Cup...



BARNSLEY v SOUTHAMPTON Today, 3.0 (sold out)

Bosonic, the robust Serbian midfielder player, is available after suspension, and the lissom Marcelle will feel aggrieved if sentenced to a substitute's role again.

was sent off against his old club, Leeds United, two weeks ago, leaves a vacancy for Richardson in the Southampton midfield. Davies is a long-term absentee, but Ostenstad, with four goals in five games, is reproducing the form that interested Manchester United last season...

TELEVISION: Today: Match of the Day, brief highlights. PREDICTION: Barnsley revival continues.



Nick Szczepanik On their recent performances, Bolton Wanderers might claim to be in the words of that classic pundits' kiss of death — Too Good To Go Down: but on their results? Hardly. Last Saturday, for example, they led at Anfield only to lose 2-1...



BOLTON WANDERERS v SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY Today, 3.0

flowed freely into treble figures last season have dried up dramatically. The return of Peter Beardsley from a loan period at Manchester City might help, if he is selected, while Mark Fish has returned from international duty with South Africa.

Goce Sedloski, the Macedonia international, has received a work permit and is in the Sheffield Wednesday squad, but may start on the bench. Wednesday are consistent only in their inconsistency: dismal at Derby a fortnight ago, dynamic in defeating Manchester United last Saturday. How they will perform is anybody's guess.

TELEVISION: Today: Match of the Day, brief highlights. PREDICTION: Wednesday happy with a point.



David Maddock They have had their false dawn, now Everton's supporters must face up to the very real prospect of relegation from the top division for the first time in 46 years. One of Everton's problems will be watching from the stands this afternoon. Against Liverpool, Duncan Ferguson was an inspiration...



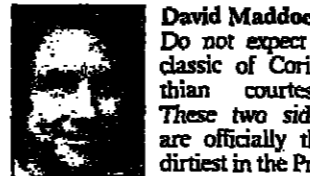
EVERTON v BLACKBURN ROVERS Today, 3.0

goals, either, just one every three games, and that is the root of Everton's problem. Even when they seemed to be sneaking out of danger around the turn of the year, they managed considerably less than a goal per game. Spencer, the loan signing from Queens Park Rangers, will lead the attack alongside Madar, without a goal in five matches. Blackburn have their own problems. They can score goals, but as 13 conceded in their last four league games testifies, they cannot defend for toffee. Roy Hodgson has few options other than the recall of Flowers, and will stand by the team that caved in at Leeds on Wednesday, the return of McKinlay apart.

TELEVISION: Today: Match of the Day, extended highlights. PREDICTION: Away win.

ON MONDAY

Brilliant insights or hopeless guesses? Check our writers' predictions against their weekend match reports



DERBY COUNTY v LEEDS UNITED Tomorrow, 4.0

David Maddock Do not expect a classic of Corinthian courtesy. These two sides are officially the dirtiest in the Premiership — they have committed more fouls than any other team — and given that the pair are probably vying for the last available Uefa Cup place, the statistics are likely to be enhanced.

second half minutes against Blackburn, Derby have been doing the same at home all season, despite suspensions. Derby have last just once at home, and look a fair bet to venture into Europe next season with their cosmopolitan band of travellers. Simeon and Grealish have picked up injuries, but both should play. Leeds are likely to be unchanged, given their stirring midweek display.

TELEVISION: Tomorrow: Live on Sky Sports 3, from 3pm. PREDICTION: Home win.

who has great back

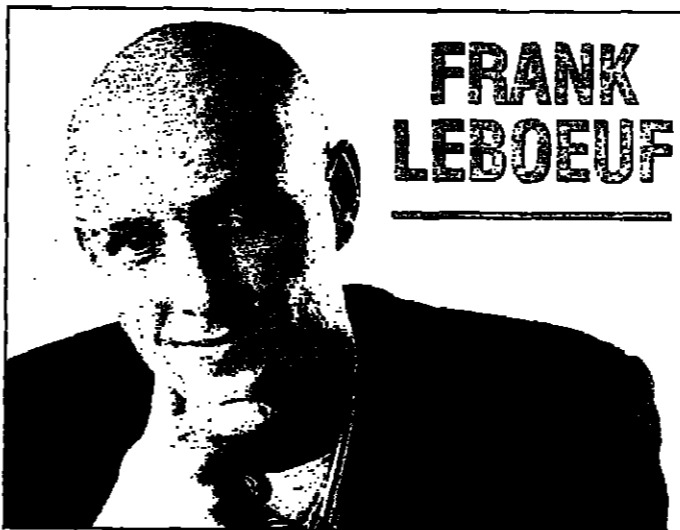
FOOTBALL SATURDAY

Franco has a ball and it's great to see the smile back on his face

Lying in my sickbed with volcanic stomach eruptions this week has given me the chance to watch the cricket. My first question, as an ignorant Frenchman, is how are you meant to tell which team is which when they both wear white? Whatever happened to the England away strip? And why on earth do you bother with such an incomprehensible game in the first place?

year in the FA Carling Premiership. Voted Footballer of the Year, and deservedly so, it was never going to be easy maintaining that form and perhaps he has not been helped by the different systems we have played up front. There have been times when he has arrived at training, or left after games, without his familiar jauntiness and huge grin.

did the trick for the man in question as he produced an excellent performance. Some people might dismiss the sign as a silly gimmick, but I believe that these little psychological ploys can prove invaluable. There is nothing worse for professional sportsmen than to be snuck in a routine.



FRANK LEBOEUF

Keeping the faith Much has been said about the pros and cons of the rotation policy at Chelsea and Gianluca Vialli introduced a variation to that theme this week when he announced that Dmitri Khariin would play in goal in league matches with Ed de Gooijer coming in for the cup games.

United have adopted a similar policy, however, and I do not think anyone doubts their wisdom. To be a successful club these days with the demands placed by the number of games, you have to have a big squad. And to keep all those players happy, you have to give them a proper chance to prove themselves.

pledged to be up-front and honest with all of us when he took the job, and by taking this strategy, he has been as good as his word. Circumstances may change, but neither Dmitri nor Ed can say that they have not been given a fair opportunity.

Brilliant Lama Talking of goalkeepers, I shall be facing my old friend Bernard Lama this afternoon when we play West Ham United. It has been such a joy for me to see him not only in the first team, but playing as brilliantly as I know he can.

When I spoke to Bernard a couple of weeks ago, he was nearly at the end of his tether. He wasn't getting any chance to play and had missed the deadline for a possible move back home.

It was an extremely difficult decision last summer to leave Paris Saint-Germain. I am sure Upton Park was hardly his favoured

destination when he left France, but West Ham are thriving and they could certainly give him the chance to stake a claim for World Cup inclusion. Hopefully this afternoon, I will give him a few opportunities to prove his undoubted talent if we get a few free kicks near their penalty area. Watch out Bernard!

Back-page blues Definitely for the last time this season, I shall make it absolutely plain that I have the utmost respect for Manchester United. I only make the point — one I have made numerous times before — because I found my way onto the back pages of a Sunday tabloid this week for reportedly tearing them to shreds.

The truth was that I gave an interview in a French newspaper in which I spoke of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the United team as they prepared to face AS Monaco. That one English paper chose to ignore the countless positive points and totally exaggerate the few negatives angered me, to say the least.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP

Table with columns for team name, last week's position, played, points, goal difference, and home/away records. Lists teams from Manchester Utd to Crystal Palace.

WEEKEND MATCHES

Table listing weekend matches across various leagues including FA Carling Premiership, Nationwide League, and others.

CAUTIONS table listing players and their respective clubs.

PREMIERSHIP table listing players and their respective clubs.

FORM GUIDE TO THE PREMIERSHIP CONTENDERS table listing team statistics and fixtures.

SCORERS table listing players and their goals.

INTERNET table listing websites for various clubs.

ARSENAL table listing fixtures and results.

CHELSEA table listing fixtures and results.

MANCHESTER UNITED table listing fixtures and results.

LIVERPOOL table listing fixtures and results.

COVERAGE table listing television and radio coverage.

TOMORROW table listing fixtures for the following day.



Dust settles to reveal Davis back on song

LIFE at the Moroccan Open was restored to some sort of normality here yesterday, and everybody enjoyed. Another day like Thursday, when the tournament was blown to smithereens, would have been too much to contemplate.

Instead of a gale there was the merest caress of breeze to ruffle the leaves of trees that the day before had lined fairways transformed into howling wind tunnels.



Tashiba sail-telling before today's start of the sixth leg in the Whitbread Round the World race in São Sebastião

Cayard remains the man to catch

likely to do well on at least the two shorter legs of the four remaining stages. Perhaps the only danger for the San Francisco-based skipper is the sort of catastrophe that struck Chris Dickson in Tokyo in the last race.

Ainslie victorious with two races to spare

BEN AINSLIE, of Great Britain, was yesterday going through the motions of completing the last two races in the 146-strong singlehanded open class at the ISAF world championships in Dubai.

RUGBY LEAGUE

Betts relishing his return to the Wigan fold

IN A corridor at Central Park, Denis Betts was holding court, while at the same time demonstrating his rebuilt shoulder.

Betts, 28, left Auckland for family reasons and returned to the Wigan bosom on a £200,000 contract. St Helens was seriously outbid for his services, but subsequently paid Warrington £370,000 for Paul Sculthorpe.

After weeks of specialist treatment on the shoulder he damaged in his last game for Auckland and training alone, the prospect of returning in a cup meeting with St Helens was a powerful incentive for Betts.

Under the week-long ownership of David Whelan, the multi-millionaire chairman of Wigan Athletic Football Club,



Monie full circle

the new regime at the club has the chance of a perfect start tomorrow. This season Wigan look a more professional and rounded outfit than the one beaten by St Helens, the holders, early in the Challenge Cup last season.

GUIDE TO THE WEEKEND FIXTURES

Table listing football fixtures for the weekend, including Premier League, Championship, and various regional leagues.

Table listing rugby union fixtures for the weekend, including Premiership, Championship, and various regional leagues.

Table listing rugby league fixtures for the weekend, including Super League and various regional leagues.

Table listing other sports fixtures, including basketball, tennis, and various regional leagues.

TOMORROW

Table listing football fixtures for the following day, including Premier League and various regional leagues.

HOCKEY

Table listing hockey fixtures for the weekend, including various leagues and international matches.

SNOW REPORTS

Table providing snow reports for various regions, including depth, conditions, and last snow dates.

Advertisement for 'STOP! WHAT CAR? CAR OF THE YEAR AWARDS 1998' featuring a car and promotional text.

Regency Rake can give Irish timely Cheltenham fillip

RACING

By Richard Evans, Racing Correspondent

REGENCY RAKE can give the Irish a confidence-boosting performance at the Cheltenham Festival next week by landing the competitive Sunderland's Imperial Cup at Sandown this afternoon.

The Arthur Moore-trained runner possesses the ideal credentials for this valuable handicap, being a lightly-raced, lowly-weighted horse open to further improvement. He rates a cracking bet at around 10-1.

One of the delights this season has been the number of times Irish and British-trained horses have clashed in competitive races, which enables an accurate assessment to be made of their comparative merits. Although Regency Rake's four runs this term have all been on home soil, various form lines linking him with British runners suggests he is well handicapped.

In December, the six-year-old was just pipped by Colton Leader at Navan. The winner, who was receiving weight from Moore's runner, subsequently finished a good third to Comanche Court, last year's Triumph Hurdle winner, and Hard News in a decent race at Leopardstown. Hard News went on to finish fourth in The Ladbrokes search form, just ahead of Advokat, who then finished a

good fifth behind Sharpal in the Tote Gold Trophy at Newbury.

This suggests Regency Rake, carrying just 10st 5lb, is a value proposition to give Moore yet another big payday this side of the Irish Sea. Most of the ante-post action in the race has concerned Rubha-hunish, whose form credentials are not exactly obvious, and Blowing Wind, who attempts to reverse the poor record of top weights in this race. The softened ground is

RICHARD EVANS

probably against Nahrwali, Alabang and Nordanwale Prince.

The biggest danger to my selection could be Hoh Express, who has attracted support from the right quarters. The bare form shown by the Lynda Ramsden-trained runner is nothing to write home about, but there is plenty of improvement to come from this useful Flat horse and he won with something to spare at Musselburgh last time. He is worth a saver.

Nap: REGENCY RAKE (4.05 Sandown Park) NB: Sail By The Stars (1.45 Cheltenham)



Braes Of Mar jumps boldly on his way to winning the Duke of Gloucester Memorial Hunters' Chase at Sandown Park yesterday

Braes Of Mar raises royal standard

By Chris McGrath

THE Queen Mother gave an insight into her infectious appetite for life at Sandown Park yesterday, sharing an uplifting afternoon's sport on the opening day of the 133rd Grand Military Meeting. Having lifted so many hearts, moreover, it was her prerogative also to raise a trophy.

Braes Of Mar, jumping boldly in front for Major Ollie Ellwood, stayed on gamely up the hill to win her the Duke of Gloucester Memorial Hunters' Chase by two lengths from Archies Oats.

Ellwood is as experienced and able as any of the riders eligible for the military races at this meeting. It would be churlish, as well as cynical, to make too dismissive a contrast between some of the lesser anties here, and the aristocracy to be seen at Cheltenham next week. Though less than half the field completed the Horse & Hoard Grand Military Gold Cup — and there were some comic departures — yesterday's card contributed healthily to the tradition of purity of jumping competition.

After all, there are races on all three days at Cheltenham devoted to amateurs. The Queen Mother had presented the trophy for the big race to Lord Mantou, whose son, Major Milo

Watson, rode Silver Stick to a seven-length defeat of Superior Finish. "I bred the winner, and I bred the jockey," the grey's proud owner said. "I even saddled him up, because the trainer isn't here." This was cause for some regret, as a podium encounter with the Queen Mother and Mick Easterby would have provided memorable testimony to the width of racing's embrace. "Two jockeys fell off at the first and I had to squeeze between them," Watson added. "I wasn't going to get brought down by a jockey."

With Cheltenham in mind, it was edifying also to see the full spectrum of jockeys. Richard Dunwoody rode a deft double on Andanito and Good Lord Murphy, while those who prospered from Braes Of Mar's stablemate, Mountain Path, should raise a glass to the dogged perseverance of his jockey, Mick Fitzgerald. After staying on gamely to defeat Knight's Crest by three lengths, Nicky Henderson, the winning trainer, said: "I think that was one of the great rides. It did not look like a jockey who was saving himself for Cheltenham. I'm exhausted just from watching." All told, it was very much an afternoon for grandstand participation.

Royal spectator, page 1

SANDOWN PARK RACING PROGRAM: 1.55 DICK MCCREERY HUNTERS CHASE, 2.55 BURNT OAK & SPECIAL CARGO NOVICES CHASE, 3.30 EBF NATIONAL HUNT NOVICES HURDLE, 4.05 SUNDERSLANDS IMPERIAL CUP HURDLE, 4.40 THAMES DITTON HANDICAP CHASE, 5.15 NIMS SANDOWN STANDARD OPEN NATIONAL HUNT FLAT RACE.

2.55 BARCLAYS BANK HANDICAP HURDLE (Ante-post riders: 24,377, 2m 110yd) (11 runners)

4.05 SUNDERSLANDS IMPERIAL CUP HURDLE (21,485, 2m 110yd) (15 runners)

4.40 THAMES DITTON HANDICAP CHASE (25,302, 3m 110yd) (11 runners)

1.55 DICK MCCREERY HUNTERS CHASE (Ante-post: 12,181, 2m 110yd) (10 runners)

3.30 EBF NATIONAL HUNT NOVICES HURDLE (Ante-post: 17,775, 2m 110yd) (18 runners)

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2.25 BURNT OAK & SPECIAL CARGO NOVICES CHASE (14,525, 2m) (10 runners)

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YESTERDAY'S RESULTS Sandown Park

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YESTERDAY'S RESULTS Sandown Park (continued)

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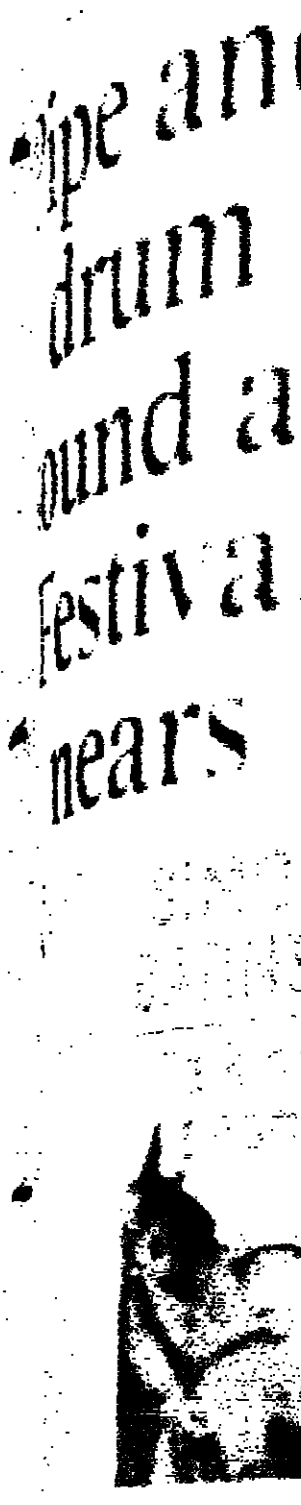
YESTERDAY'S RESULTS Sandown Park (continued)

RACELINE SANDOWN CHEPSTOW AYR WIMBORNE IRISH

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS Cheltenham (continued)

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS Sandown Park (continued)

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS Sandown Park (continued)



'He is as voracious for new technology as ever and intends to keep that edge over the rest'

Pipe and drum sound as Festival nears

No doubt about it, it was one of the great sights of the horse year. Martin Pipe's horses for Cheltenham: here they come!

SIMON BARNES Talking horse



trainer of racehorses. You don't become a serial champion trainer by fluke, still less by skulduggery.



Man in the middle: Pipe tends to believe that the world is against him. In fact, only half of the world is against him; the other half is with him. Photograph: Hugh Routledge

Martin Pipe's horses for Cheltenham: is there a trainer in the land who wouldn't swap his entire string for a half of these, or a quarter?

The Pipe pits. Pipe still has the edge. And he is as voracious for technology as ever: he intends to keep that edge.

Punters are romantic perhaps none more romantic than the real hard-nut, who is romantic about money.

And he has come nearer to succeeding than any trainer that has ever existed. No wonder his rivals hate him.

jumping ring, in which a horse can learn to jump without the inconvenience of a rider.

outsider in racing's cosy world: first as a bookmaker's son, then as a trainer based, not in matey, scandal-ridden Lambourn, but miles away in Devon.

A degree of acceptance, perhaps. Knowing that genuine excellence and poisonous envy are inseparable; that the one thing people hate more than a tradition-breaker is a tradition-breaker who succeeds.

Sail By The Stars can extend run in endurance test

CHEPSTOW BBC1 1.15: Zander, who has rubbed shoulders with some decent types, may have encountered another on his return to hurdles.

1.45: Belmont King is an exception to the fine season being enjoyed by so many of his stablemates, but his prospects are not so forlorn as his form figures suggest.

2.15: Soloman should be a decent performer in time, but may not yet be ready for such a gruelling contest, especially with his stable so quiet.

Injury rules out The Bounder

JUST when next Thursday's Foxhunters Chase at Cheltenham was looking like a vintage contest, The Bounder has developed heat in a leg and will be an absentee.

AVR 3.05 HAMILTON CAMPBELL HANDICAP CHASE (2,172: 3m 10f) 1. 5053 PROFICIENT 12 (6) M Hazard 11-10-9 G Garity

2.00 JOHN BROWN MEMORIAL NOVICES CHASE (2,026: 3m 10f) 1. 5117 PAPERBROS 20 (8) P J Barry 5-11-9 G Hazard

2.35 EAGLE TAVERNS NOVICES HANDICAP HURDLE (2,652: 3m 110yd) 1. 021 MERRY MANSOURIDE 20 (8) M Hazard 5-11-10

4.50 FIELD AND LAWN STANDARD OPEN NATIONAL HUNT FLAT RACE (2,266: 2m) (B) 1. 1100 BODDYBROOK 20 (8) P Hazard 5-11-11

WOLVERHAMPTON 4.25 ED WEETMAN HAULAGE & STORAGE LINCOLN TRIAL HANDICAP (2,010: 1m 100yd) (13)

Table with 2 columns: Race number and details. Includes race 2.20 THUNDERER, 2.20 VICTORIA MAIDEN STAKES, 2.50 NORTHERN TERRITORY WOLVERHAMPTON SELLS STAKES.

5.00 TASMANIA HANDICAP (2,340: 1m 6f 100yd) (9)

Table with 2 columns: Race number and details. Includes race 3.25 WESTERN AUSTRALIA CONDITIONS STAKES.

3.55 J S WRIGHT HANDICAP (2,576: 5f) (13)

Table with 2 columns: Race number and details. Includes race 4.15 HUGH BARCLAY CHALLENGE CUP HANDICAP CHASE.

4.50 COURSE SPECIALISTS

Table with 2 columns: Race number and details. Includes race 5.00 RACING NEXT WEEK.

THE TIMES UNIT TRUST PRICES

Table of unit trust prices for various funds including AG GENIUS UNIT TRUST LTD, AG GENIUS UNIT TRUST LTD, AG GENIUS UNIT TRUST LTD, etc.

Table of unit trust prices for various funds including AG GENIUS UNIT TRUST LTD, AG GENIUS UNIT TRUST LTD, AG GENIUS UNIT TRUST LTD, etc.

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Advertisement for Roche-Bobois featuring a watch and the text 'From 5th to 15th March How will you resist Roche-Bobois prices?'.

The



THE YOUNG ONES 55

Now the mis-selling hunt starts for the thirtysomethings

WEEKEND MONEY

BABY TALK 64

A new arrival changes hopes for the Budget



The seven deadly sins

Patrick Collinson says that some investment marketing men's tactics do leave rather a lot to be desired

Over-eager investment marketing men will never make it to heaven to judge by the standards of some investment adverts which strain the limits of truth and credibility...



Investment advertising copywriters have their own seven deadly sins but not quite as gruesome as those Morgan Freeman encountered in Seven

1 Performance period: Investment funds have peaks and troughs. All a manager has to do is to pick the date of his worst performance and compare it with a recent peak...

2 Investment awards: Look out for 'Award-winning group'. The past few years have seen a huge expansion in the number of gongs awarded by new specialist publications...

3 Mergers: An investment manager can merge one underperforming fund into another with a much better performance...

4 Taking charges from capital: Advertisements can promote a high yield (income) but investors should check the small print to see if the fund charges are taken from income or capital...

5 Fund performance versus group performance: A large investment group may have 20 different unit trusts. Nineteen may be at the bottom of the investment rankings...

A loophole opens — for the brave — to make a killing in Far East Peps

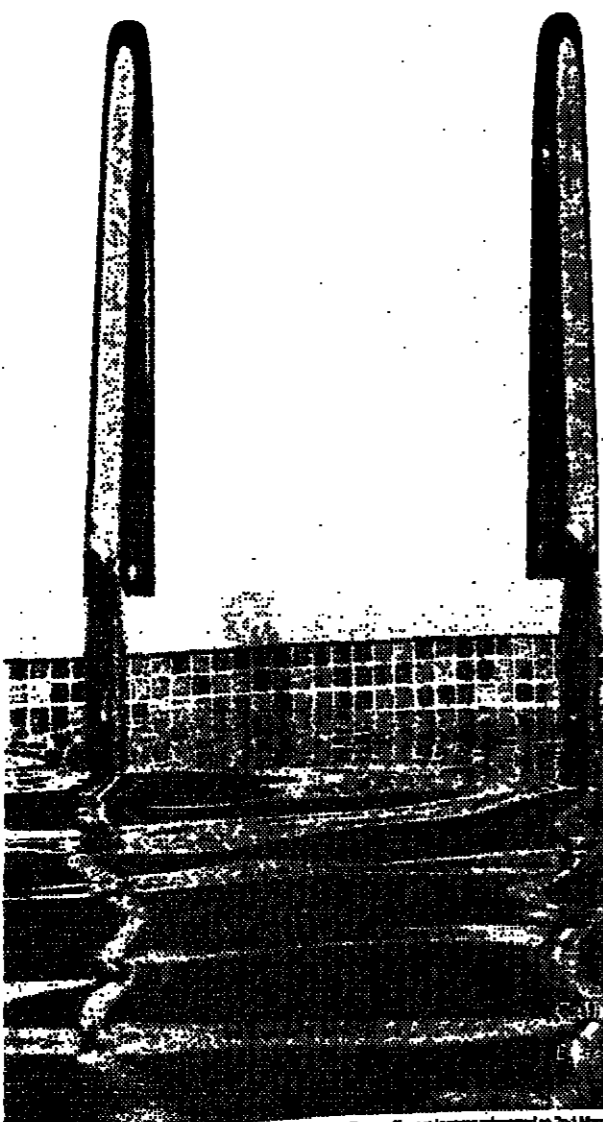
Far East stock markets have made a dramatic recovery this year after being devastated in the second half of 1997. Thailand has shot up an astonishing 73 per cent...

Analysts support Mr Haydn's outlook. Ashok Shah, of Old Mutual Asset Managers, says while the economic crisis threatens unemployment and pay cuts for millions of Asian workers it also poses a double whammy for companies in the West...

Mr Shah said: 'Asian currencies will recover in value and their exporters will make record profits while their competitors around the world struggle. It may take months to be produced, but the script for the Asian revival is already written.'

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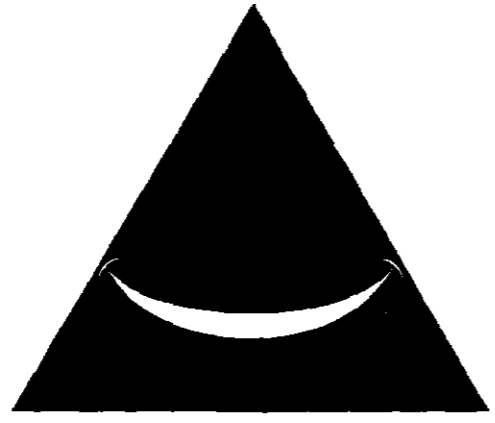
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Warm glow of togetherness

Pension funds' overseas portfolios have consistently tended to underperform global share indexes over the past few years. There is one simple reason. They have invested far less than proportionately in America, which now accounts for about half the value of all the world's quoted shares.

Quarter after quarter, fund managers have looked across the Atlantic, shaken their heads at the prices being asked and headed elsewhere. Yet, with the odd interruption, old man Wall Street has just kept rolling along. Standard & Poor's industrial index, a bit more representative than the 50-share Dow Jones average, has risen about 35 per cent since the start of last year.

If you look again today, it is hard not to sympathise with errant fund managers. A year ago, stock in the S&P sold at an average 23 times earnings (or net profits) and yielded only 1.7 per cent in dividend. These were historically high ratings after long years of economic growth, which seemed more likely to slow than to accelerate.

Today, however, the S&P average sells at 29 times earnings and yields less than 1.4 per cent. Share prices have charged ahead much faster than corporate reality. Short of tearing up all your previous logic, it is hard to put a lot more money into America at this stage.

In reality, many fund managers, like private investors, tend to treat overseas investment as something to spice up the portfolio, an exotic venture into a world of higher risk (not least from the exchange rate), in exchange for exposure to higher returns in less mature economies if things go right.

Wall Street, which ought to be the most mature of markets, does not seem



GRAHAM SEARJEANT

to fit this emotional role. Fortunately for UK fund managers, only their overseas portfolios have suffered badly from this anti-American prejudice. UK shares, which naturally dominate most funds with UK liabilities, have been one of the best proxies for Wall Street. They now look expensive too but at least the constituents of the FTSE All-share index sell at a slightly more realistic 21 times earnings on average and yield a slightly less negligible 2.4 per cent.

Ordinary investors have even less reason to worry about investing in mature markets abroad. A study from HSBC James Capel suggests that over 20 years there has been a more than 90 per cent correlation between the movements of most big stock markets round the world and Wall Street. Aside from emerging markets, the glaring exceptions have been Japan and Italy.

Just as opinion polls can be skewed by the wording of the questions, so such statistical analyses can be fixed to produce something nearer the result you want. As Capel points out, the overall correlation is dominated by the trend of

economic growth and inflation. If you correct for these, the connections are looser. But they are still strong. Monthly changes in share prices in the UK, France and Germany are, for instance, about two thirds correlated with Wall Street. This rises to three quarters for the Dutch market, which is dominated by world-class stocks such as Unilever.

The key differences are cyclical. The economic and monetary cycles of Western European countries are not even synchronised with Britain, let alone America, which is trying to keep the fires of growth banked while Germany and France are still trying to set them alight. Both history and common sense suggest that private investors should venture into good continental stocks rather than worry about Wall Street.

European and American markets are also growing ever closer together. This is in part the influence of global investment, which links financial markets round the world to short-term US interest rates. The greater influence has been the spread of IMF/OECD economic orthodoxy. For a decade, governments have shared a common strategy to beat inflation, control money growth and balance their budgets. Growth has become steadier and national shocks fewer.

Monetary union may make Europe diverge from America for a while but UK markets seem certain to correlate more strongly with what will become the single continental one. This process should also favour continental equities over British shares if things go right. It could make UK bonds and gilt-edged a two-way bet: for convergence if EMU prospers and security if it turns nasty.

Do not be tempted to squirrel away the shiny new commemorative 50p coin marking 25 years of Britain's membership of the European Union.

According to the experts the investment potential is close to zero.

In 1973 the Royal Mint issued its first commemorative 50p, showing nine hands clasped together as Britain, Ireland and Denmark joined the other six members of the European Union. Twenty-five years later even a perfect, scratch-free 1973 50p coin is worth... 50p. Meanwhile, inflation has decimated the real value of a 1973 50p to just 5p today.

The problem with the 1973 coin is that 89.7 million were issued, which somewhat dents its rarity value. This time round the Royal Mint has issued "only" five million special coins showing 12 stars designed to represent each member of the EU and mark Britain's six-month stint in the presidency of the EU. But the Royal Mint says it may issue more if there is more demand.

Edward Baldwin, managing director of A H Baldwin,

Little chance of coining it

London coin dealers, say that millions of commemorative coins disappear from circulation into people's bottom drawers, but few if any will give an investment return.

He said: "It's a wonderful way for the Government to raise money but I'm afraid there's no investment potential in them. Look what's happened to the value of the Coronation Crown issued in 1953.

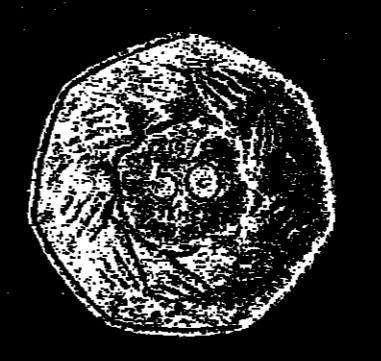
"You'd be lucky to get £1 for it today for a perfect specimen. The same happened with the Churchill Crown issued in 1965."

Even special precious metal

coins - silver or gold proof crowns - issued during the postwar period have performed badly, says Mr Baldwin. "They trade for a lot less than they were issued at. It's like buying a new car - its value falls very sharply during the first year."

When Britain's currency was decimalised in 1971 no fewer than half of all the withdrawn coins previously in circulation - such as the sixpence and threepenny bit - were never returned to the Mint but vanished into private collections.

Today the British public's sentimental attachment to holding on to old coins shows no signs of waning. A Royal Mint spokesman says that, of the 440 million old-style 50p coins in circulation, only 336 million have been recovered. That leaves 104 million 50p coins - worth £52 million - still in the public's hands despite the fact that they are no longer legal tender. "By all means put a blemish-free coin away but don't expect to make any money out of it," said Mr Baldwin.



Unfortunately for investors the 1973 50p is far from rare PATRICK COLLINSON

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Legal & General

Nice ads, shame about the statistics

In the depths of the London Underground, one sign of the approach of spring and the end of the financial year is a crop of posters extolling the performance of fund management groups. Each claims that its personal equity plans are second to none, giving graphs and tables as evidence.

Looking at these infinitely plausible assertions, and then around at your fellow commuters, you wonder why anyone needs to work, given that widely available investments seemingly yield such stupendous returns. But these advertisements should be treated with the same scepticism that surrounds endorsements from critics on the film and play posters also lining the Tube platforms.

Snippets from cinema and theatre reviews are used selectively to show a production in the best possible light. As our report on page 45 reveals, some fund management groups make the same creative use of performance statistics, picking halcyon periods when their Peps looked most creditable.



COMMENT
ANNE ASHWORTH
Personal Finance Editor

Those who see advertising as a form of entertainment rather than information will take a lenient view of such practices. But the public expects higher standards from financial advertising, believing that the contents are subjected to rigorous verification. They do not suspect that the rules, while detailed and stringent, still give managers room for manoeuvre.

favourable a light on fair-to-mid-dling performance.

Come on, Gordon

The extension of the pensions review to workers in their thirties comes as no surprise. It is doubtless easy to sell an unsuitable pension to a person for whom retirement is a distant event, and to whom projected payout figures appear to be a fortune. But the repercussions of this scandal are now reaching out beyond those directly involved, to workers in their mid and late twenties, the Generation X. The news that thirtysomethings can expect mea-

gre pensions, unless they can secure adequate compensation, is scarcely an inspiration for those who have yet to embark on such planning. Liam and Noel Gallagher of Oasis, 25 and 30 respectively, may have recently stashed several million in pension plans. But their fearsome reputation is an efficient deterrent against mis-selling.

The Chancellor would like young employed to develop the long-term savings habit. However, he must appreciate that this age group has few incentives to be thrifty. People in their forties have had help building up wealth. Their retirement savings have been boosted by stock market boom years. They have also enjoyed mortgage interest relief and generous pension tax breaks. The unfortunate thirtysomething, in insecure casual employment, is likely to face the loss of Miras and a further erosion of pension tax breaks. In next week's Budget, Gordon Brown, 47, should remember what it was like to be young.

Less interesting than they appear

Is the Scarborough Building Society's table-topping 7.6 per cent 30-day notice savings account as attractive as it looks?

The account currently tops the best buy table supplied by MoneyFacts to *The Times* Weekend Money, offering customers with as little as £1,000 an interest rate usually on offer only to people with more than £10,000 to put away.

Money is pouring into the account, with more than 1,000 savers contacting Scarborough last week alone to request details. But one Weekend Money reader rang our newsdesk to alert potential savers to the small print on the back of the leaflet promoting the account. The eighth asterisk reads: "The account will revert to instant access with effect from 01.06.99."

Scarborough's current instant access rate is only 1.85 to 3.6 per cent for branch business and 3.4 to 3.9 per cent for postal business. So in just 15 months' time, assuming rates do not change, savers who have diligently sought out the best rate in the market could find their money sitting in an

Top accounts are not always what they seem, says Patrick Collinson

account paying interest significantly below rates available elsewhere.

Scarborough is also under fire for leaving 75-day notice account holders on interest rates sharply lower than its headline-grabbing 30-day account. Savers who invested two years ago in the 75-day account earned 6.3 per cent gross but this has now sagged to just 4.8 per cent for savings under £5,000 (see right).

When Weekend Money contacted the Scarborough, a spokesman robustly defended the account. He said: "During May next year we will write to all our 30-day account customers reminding them that the account becomes instant access. If they are not happy with the rate, they can move to another account without notice or penalty." But he confirmed that the

account will not continue to pay a rate of 7.6 per cent. He said: "It will become a rate which will be competitive at the time. It will be dependent on what market rates are at the time."

The issue of accounts that pay high rates initially but become obsolete and pay lower rates in later years has dogged the savings industry for years. Last week *The Times* highlighted Northern Rock's habit of introducing new accounts which are then allowed to drop to uncompetitive levels, although the bank has now pledged to contact each customer every time it launches a new account or changes its rate.

Scarborough insists that it will stand by its pledge to remain competitive. Its spokesman said: "One of the biggest complaints is that the market moves on and savers are stuck in old accounts. We have done a whole range of things to avoid this. We have written to 23,000 people in obsolete accounts to tell them about their options. But with non-obsolete accounts it's up to the customer."

Scarborough fair?

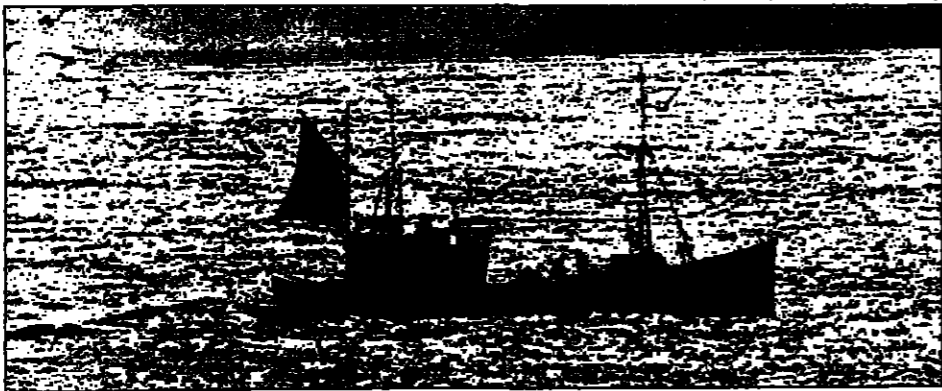
Scarborough is also under fire for leaving 75-day notice account holders on interest rates sharply lower than for its headline-grabbing 30-day account (Patrick Collinson writes). Savers who invested two years ago in the 75-day account earned 6.3 per cent gross but this has now sagged to just 4.8 per cent for savings under £5,000.

Eric Newton, a retired certified accountant and church pastoral assistant, put £2,000 into the Scarborough 75-day account in April 1996, which promised "the maximum rate for the

minimum balance". But he was angered to discover, after telephoning Scarborough, that the rate had fallen from 6.3 per cent to 4.8 per cent.

Mr Newton wrote to Scarborough last week, saying: "Can you explain why I am receiving such a poor return in comparison to the new account?"

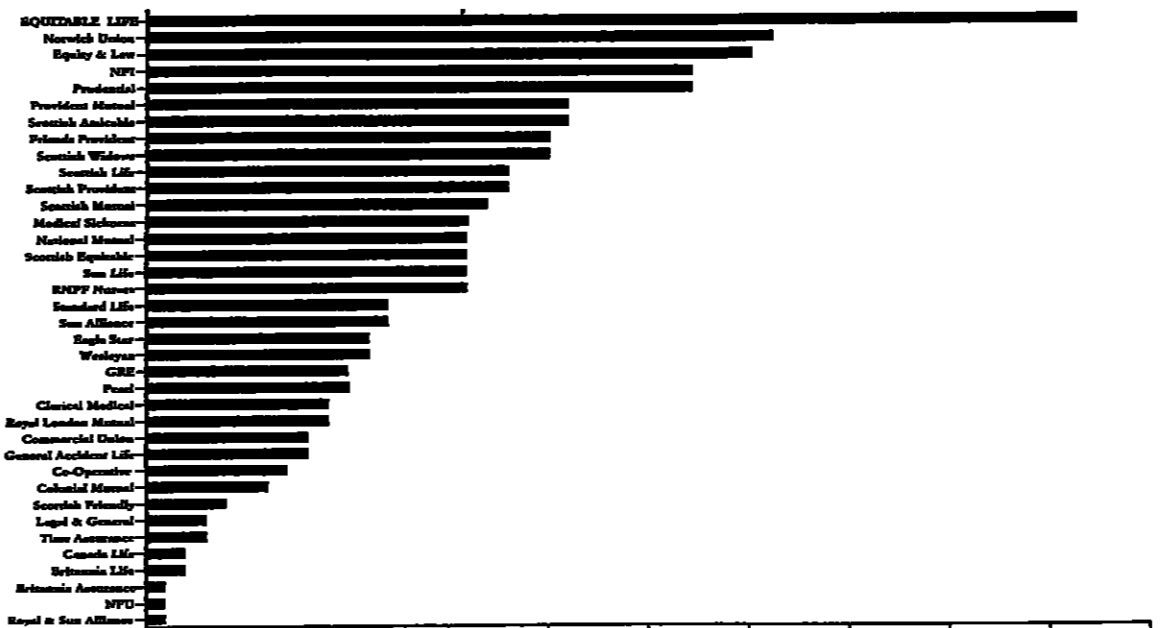
A Scarborough spokesman said: "All changes to our rates are advertised in the national press. Mr Newton is free to switch into another account, and we are happy to waive notice."



The Scarborough is netting a big catch but next season the shoals of savers may swim away

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Source: Planned Savings surveys of regular contribution with-profits personal pension plans 1974-1997

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Please note that not all companies have submitted returns to *Planned Savings* in every year. Also, some companies listed no longer sell with profits plans.

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* Source: *Money Management*, after its 10th anniversary. Launch date 13 October 1986. Issued by Framlington Unit Management Limited, member of the Framlington Marketing Group. Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority and IFA. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. The price of units and the income from them can go down as well as up and investors may not get back the amount originally invested. Changes in exchange rates will affect the value of the fund's investments. Investments in higher return but may also involve a higher degree of risk. The Government has announced that from 1998 tax advantages such as PEPs and TESSAs will be replaced with a new individual savings account (ISA). Details of the ISA are currently subject to consultation and the final form is not yet known.



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Gavin Lumsden explains how a mighty industry that has £56bn

Why investment trust

The £56 billion investment trust industry is about to be ravaged by a combination of shareholder rebellions, continuing tax reforms and next year's introduction of the individual savings account.

The bloodbath got underway last week when four investment trusts, managing £450 million of assets, bowed to shareholder pressure and announced plans to go into liquidation and hand back cash to investors.

Another seven are considering their future. At this rate 1998 promises to be an even worse year for investment trusts than 1997, when more than £2 billion flowed out of the sector, compared with the £10 billion that went into unit trusts. Some analysts are even predicting that the investment trusts movement, which has its roots in the 19th century, will not survive into the next millennium.

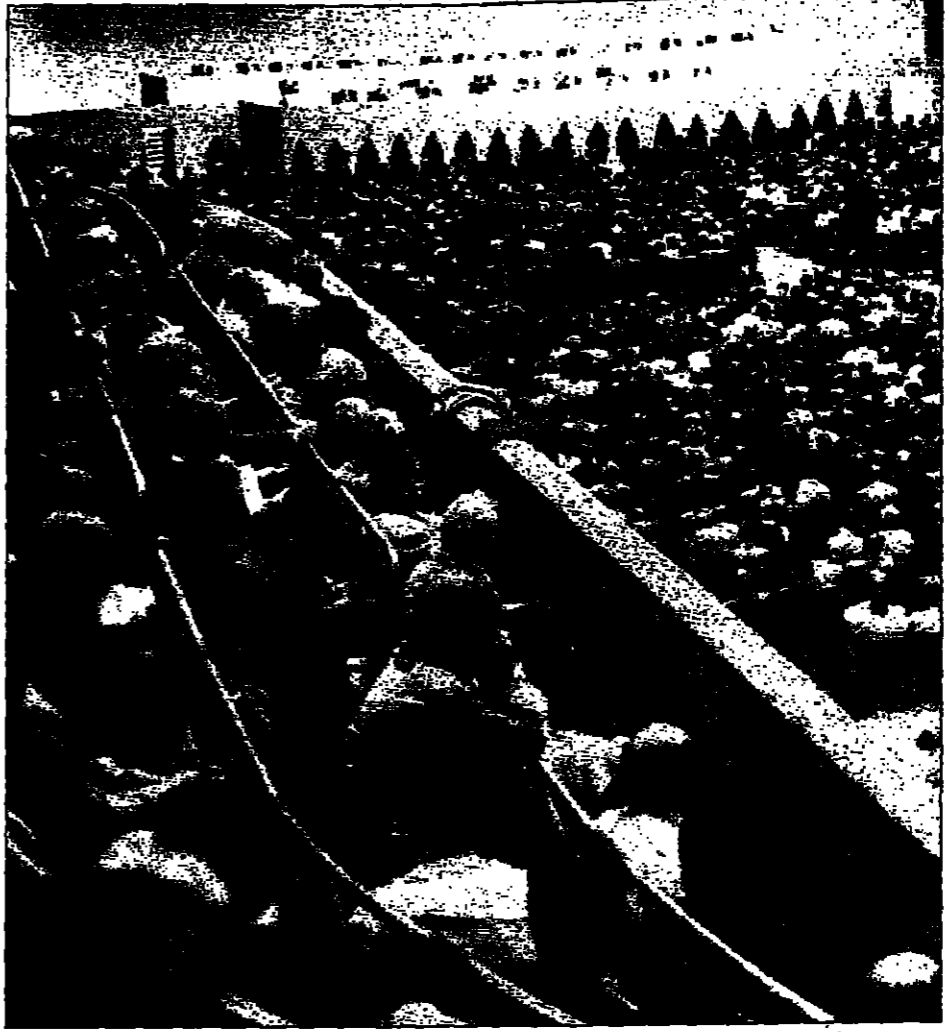
For private investors the turmoil presents a golden carpetbagging opportunity. Investment trusts are companies which invest in the shares of other companies at home and abroad. Much of the shareholder unrest has been caused by the fact that most investment trust shares have fallen to substantial discounts in recent years.

A discount is the gap between a share's price and the actual value of the assets it represents. Since 1994 discounts have widened to as much as 13 per cent. This means a share representing 100p of assets can be bought for 87p - good news if you are buying but bad news if you are stuck but want to get out.

City institutions such as insurers and pension managers are now fighting to get their money out. Although in the past they have been big supporters of investment trusts, today most of these companies get their investment expertise from in-house fund managers and no longer need to buy the shares. Indeed, it has been their long-term lack of interest in the sector which has sent discounts soaring.

More recently, investment trusts, which mostly focus on overseas stocks, have been hit by the strong pound, which has cut their earnings. At the same time they have missed out on the dramatic surge in the UK stock market.

Defenders of investment trusts say all these factors are cyclical and that things can



Shareholders are being coerced at AGMs into agreeing moves that may not be in their interests

only get better. They point out that discounts in the 1970s were over 30 per cent, much higher than they are today.

Unfortunately for investment trusts, times have changed since the 1970s. Fund managers can no longer pack trust boards with their cronies and ignore shareholders' interests. Nowadays, City institutions have vulture funds and US arbitrageurs to do their dirty work for them.

Outfits such as Advance UK and the New York groups Sierra Trading and Elliot Associates build up aggressive stakes in trusts and then force the boards to take action to improve shareholder returns or go into liquidation.

Private investors can join in the asset grabbing by buying investment trusts on the cheap and then wait for the vultures to unlock the money. Potentially, the pickings are large and easy to get, even though the costs of liquidating a trust can be high.

Most boards will set liquidation

expenses at about 1.5-3 per cent depending on how much they have to pay in fees to advisers, lawyers and compensation to the fund manager. However, the forced "fire sale" of assets can easily raise expenses to 8 per cent, or £24 million for a £300 million trust. But, so long as expenses do not exceed the discount on the share, there is money to be made. For example, shares bought at a 12 per cent discount will get a 4 per cent uplift at liquidation, even if costs reach the upper limit.

However, carpetbaggers need to get moving as discounts on the most vulnerable trusts are already narrowing and the potential profits are sliding away.

Inevitably, the situation has upset old hands in the industry. Michael Hart, director-general of the Association of Investment Trusts and former manager of the Foreign & Colonial investment trust, has

attacked the "quick profit brigade" in the City for threatening what has been the best-ever savings vehicle for investors.

"There has been a lot of talk from institutions about rationalising poor-performing trusts. Now they are attacking good performers at relatively low discounts. There is a danger that the investment trust industry will get smaller and smaller and lose critical mass and credibility. That would be a great shame for private investors who have had very good returns from investment trusts in the long term," he said.

Mr Hart is particularly angry about Baring Tribune, a £346 million trust, which was forced last week by Advance UK and two insurers to include a vote on restructuring at its annual meeting on April 2. The announcement sent shock waves throughout the investment trust world, coming as it did after liquidation proposals from Henderson

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Clare Stewart on further moves to drop home loan protection

End to MIGs is no guarantee of saving



Fred MacMurray and Barbara Stanwyck were involved in a case of Double Indemnity, for borrowers one dose is enough

Mortgage indemnity guarantees (MIGs) were again attracting attention this week after two more lenders declared their hand on this controversial issue. The latest moves come a month after a number of the biggest mortgage lenders including the Halifax and Abbey National announced that they would abolish MIGs for customers borrowing up to 90 per cent of the property value. The borrower pays the premium on a MIG, a charge which can add £1,000 or more to the cost of a loan. But the lender collects on the policy if the property is repossessed and the house sells for less than the loan. This week Prudential Banking, part of the Prudential group, said it too will drop the charge for mortgages where the borrower can put down a deposit of more than 10 per cent. The change will affect around 3,000 customers out of its total customer base of 10,000, and will include people who have mortgage applications currently being processed but which have not yet completed. The decision to drop the charge, said Kathy Taylor, mortgage manager for Prudential Banking, was part of the review of its mortgage products, but, she added, interest rates on mortgage products have not been raised to pay for the charge. Dropping the MIG charge adds up to sizeable savings for Prudential customers. For example, on a property valued at £116,000, where a loan of £100,000 is sought, the premium for mortgage indemnity cover would be £887. Yorkshire Building Society has also announced a move on MIGs but on a different basis. Rather than abolishing the charge, it is offering two MIG-free mortgages as part of its current range. The charge-free offers include a four-year capped mortgage at 7.35 per cent and a five-year fixed rate of 7.09 per cent. These apply for loans up to 95 per cent of loan to value. These compare with 6.99 per cent inclusive of a MIG charge for a four-year capped rate, and 6.79 per cent inclusive on the five-year fixed offer. Again rates apply up to a maximum of 95 per cent loan to value. "We are running a test with the new rates to try to establish the demand. We are not convinced that there is a huge demand from the public, as most borrowers choose on the basis of the lowest rates available," said David Holmes, spokesman for Yorkshire Building Society. He described the move by a number of the largest lenders to remove MIGs as "a window dressing exercise" and a move

to regain market share, but that in effect customers of these groups would pay for the move through higher rates overall. "Existing customers will end up subsidising new borrowers." Mortgage indemnity guarantees have been heavily criticised because of the poor deal they offer homeowners. The arrangement before recent changes applied to most people taking out a loan for three quarters or more of the property value. Effectively the MIG provides an insurance for the lender against the cost of a borrower falling into arrears with payments, and the property having to be repossessed. The chief criticisms, levelled at the charge, which largely affects first-time buyers and in some instances self-employed borrowers, include the high level of premiums, and the fact that, despite paying the premiums, the homeowner receives no benefits. Nor does it protect the homeowner because, if a property is repossessed and a claim is made against the insurance scheme, a borrower may still find himself liable for the costs of the repossession. The Halifax has said it will abolish MIG charges at least until the end of 1998. A month after the announcement, it reports that it is "very pleased with the way it has gone down with customers" although it was not prepared to quantify the extra volume of business more precisely. However, not all Halifax customers are feeling so pleased. One Times reader is unhappy at missing out, having completed a house purchase just a few days after the change came into effect. "Had we known about this we could have applied for our mortgage and saved ourselves £3,300," she writes. Anyone who applied for a Halifax mortgage before February 9 and who has not yet completed should go back to their local branch to renegotiate the offer in the light of the MIG abolition. "We have the discretion to change the offer if customers are not happy," confirmed a Halifax spokesman. The debate over MIGs is likely to continue for some time, with other lenders under pressure to make a move in order not to lose ground to the main market players. The changes so far "have shaken up the market and put the likes of Halifax and Abbey National in a strong position," noted Ian Darby, marketing director of John Charcol, the mortgage brokers. But, he added, it remains to be seen if the cost of abolishing the charges is factored back in when lenders announce their next set of mortgage deals. "You may see a bigger differential between the cost of mortgages where the loan is over 75 per cent of the property value." First-time buyers and others looking for a loan of between 90 and 95 per cent may have to look carefully at how the sums add up and whether alternative financing is cheaper, said Mr Darby. Mortgage indemnity charges still apply at this level and the borrower is likely to be paying a significant premium just for the extra 5 per cent. "It might almost be cheaper to get a bank loan to cover this amount," he added.

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Expand without allowing the balloon to blow up in your face

As soon as your new business is up and running, one of the first things you will probably want to do is expand.

Some are happy to earn a reasonable living and enjoy life without the added pressures of putting their neck on the block by trying to build a thriving company employing hundreds of people.

However, the majority of entrepreneurs wish to keep on building their enterprise until it can go no further, partly for the satisfaction of establishing a large company and partly for the financial gains.

Managing a growing business can be both frustrating and rewarding and knowing how and when to go about expanding an already well-established business can be the difference between spectacular success and financial ruin.

The Federation of Small Businesses estimates that half of the companies which attempt to expand end up back where they started because their plans have gone awry.

Yet Britain needs small businesses to grow. According to Stephen Alambritis, of the Federation, there are about four million small companies in the UK and 18,000 large organisations, but not a lot in the middle.

He said: "There is a definite shortage of medium-sized companies and small businesses should be encouraged to expand to help fill the void."

To have the best chance of achieving your expansion targets there are a number of key issues which you must address.

Do you need to expand?

Some people assume that expansion is all part of running a successful company, but this is not necessarily the case.

If expansion is going to cost a lot of time, money and hassle, with very little reward, it is probably best not to bother.

Ask yourself whether you really need to expand and only go ahead with your plans if you are convinced the answer is yes.

Are you in a position to expand?

Trying to grow too quickly can result in catastrophe. One of the main reasons why companies go to the wall in this country is not because they are unsuccessful, but because they run into cashflow problems. And one of the biggest drains on an organisation's financial health is expansion.

To be able to fund an expansion you should either have enough cash in the bank or equity in the business, to pay for it all, and if it is going to be necessary for you to take on substantial borrowing you should be sure that you are

going to be able to afford to repay it.

Will expansion alter the nature of your business?

Expanding into new markets can be dangerous, because you are probably moving away from the core areas which you have built your business on, and because the market you are aiming for will possibly be untried and untested.

Sometimes it will be necessary to expand to protect your existing business. For example, if a competitor moves in to your patch, or your market, you could lose business, or even your company altogether.

If this is your dilemma, estimate the potential losses against the costs of expanding and if expansion is going to be the greater, it might be better to concede some ground rather than risk everything on a costly exercise.

What will it cost you?

You usually have to spend to expand, and if you are already established in business you will know that no matter how carefully you plan for the costs involved, you invariably find yourself going over budget.

The main costs of expansion are extra bank interest and loan repayments on money you have had to borrow, the expense of finding, recruiting and employing additional staff, paying for and fitting out bigger premises or new sites, advertising, marketing and the increased day-to-day operating costs.

The business plan.

In the same way that you have to put together an in-depth business plan when you set up your company in the first place, you will need an equally comprehensive plan when you decide to expand because your bank manager will use it to help to estimate the risk of lending you money.

Make sure the assessment of cashflow is an honest one. The bank will want to study this closely, since it indicates the maximum borrowing you will need to finance your plans.

Limited company or not?

If you are operating as a sole trader or partnership you should consider setting up as a limited company as you expand, because this gives you a degree of personal protection in case the venture goes wrong.

It also widens your powers to run a company and to enable you to borrow money.

It is relatively cheap to do, as you can buy an already incorporated concern off the shelf for around £100, and then, all you have to pay for is the legal cost of changing the name to your own business and having a lawyer check the details of incorporation.

'Make sure your cashflow figure is an honest one, as the bank will use it to gauge the loan'

JOHN GIVENS

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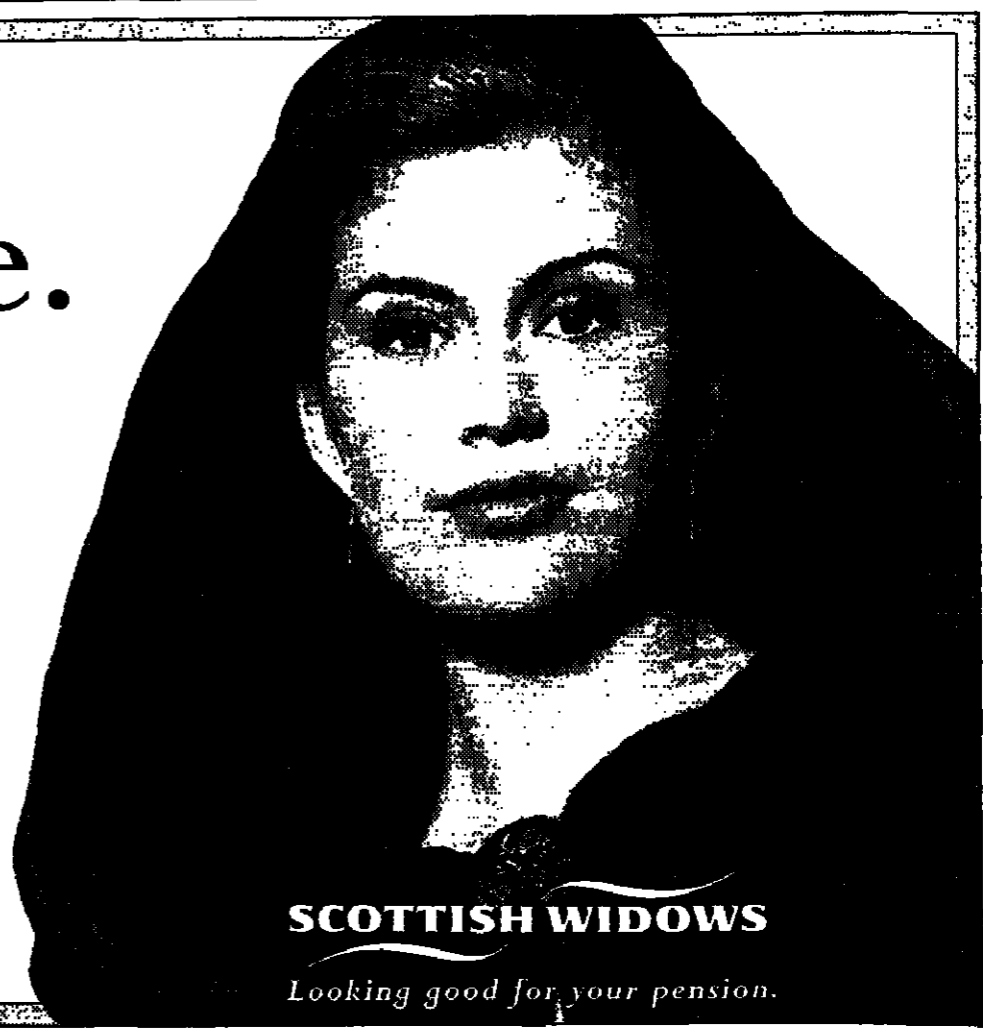
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Martin Waller turns to a book on how the professionals make money

One's instinctive reaction, on seeing yet another book on how to invest profitably in the stock market is to wonder why, if the author is reduced to publishing small circulation non-fiction rather than lying on a beach somewhere watching the money roll in.

Money Makers, subtitled *The Stock Market Secrets of Britain's Top Professional Investors*, claims to provide the expertise of not one but eight of the market's most successful operators. Its author, Jonathan Davis, is a former journalist at this newspaper, among others, who quit scribbling for a business degree at MIT in America, where he concentrated on the methods of Warren Buffett, the most successful investor America has seen.

Davis decided to focus on Buffett's British counterparts, profiling them and their strategies. It is tempting to concentrate on their portraits, especially as one of the eight is Jim Slater, the man behind the collapsed Slater Walker empire and someone whose biography includes an attempt by the Singapore Government to extradite him to the island's notorious Changi jail, an episode that rewarded him with the sobriquet "Changi Jim".

After all, Davis himself quotes Buffett, in the book's introduction, as saying that investment management is "25 per cent performance, 75 per cent marketing", a truth self-evident for high-profile professionals such as the ubiquitous Slater and another of the eight, Mark Mobius. Davis tries to look at each investor's approach individually and then to pull together any common threads.

Davis starts with arguably the most technically minded of the bunch, Anthony Bolton of Fidelity, a man he describes as "the professional's professional". Bolton is to a great extent a chartist. Chartists believe that patterns recur, and can be predicted. Bolton is also the market's equivalent to a scrap metal merchant, seeking out overlooked truffles in areas shunned by other investors. He believes in sticking to a few stocks you know well and avoiding areas that you do not understand, while concentrating on companies with good cash generation and sound finances.

Ian Rushbrook, formerly at Ivory & Sims, runs a single

Secrets of successful investors

investment trust, Personal Assets, in which he has £6 million of his own money. He mistrusts much of the market's received wisdom, such as attractions of a low price/earnings ratio, a low ratio of share price to book value and a high dividend yield.

Rather than signalling undervalued stocks, these may merely be the market anticipating bad times ahead that justify this low rating, he says. His advice to the private investor wanting to run his or her own portfolio is, don't — leave it to the professionals and invest in five or six of the better-known investment trusts.

Jacob, now Lord, Rothschild set up his own financial services business after severing links with N M Rothschild, the family investment bank. One of his chosen men is Nils Taube, an Estonian refugee now a British subject. This former stockbroker has brought with him "a healthy scepticism about the realities

of business", says Davis — for which read, an unwillingness to believe what companies say about themselves.

He is known as a patient investor, taking relatively large stakes and sitting on them until his hunches or perceptions are rewarded by performance. But he says a key element of a successful investor is "a dash of cowardice", knowing when to cut and run.

Davis points out that one of the least entrepreneurial places is the actuarial department of a Scottish life insurance company. Yet this is the background of Colin McLean, who struck out, at 37 and with three children to provide for, to found Scottish Value Management. He emphasises key ratios such as cashflow, operating margin or return on capital employed. As a cautious Scot, he advises that you get these right and read warily to disappointing newspaper headlines, rather than acting in concert with every other

investor. Follow the market, he says, and "you're not applying any superior knowledge".

Michael Hart is one of the Grand Old Men of investment management. Since Davis spoke to him he has gone into semi-retirement to become the director-general of the Association of Investment Trust Companies. At least one of his guiding principles is hardly applicable to the small investor, an ability to use currency borrowings to maximise a fund's returns. But he has shown a willingness to invest in a falling market.

If Davis's last two professionals, Mark Mobius and Jim Slater, are almost household names, John Carrington is probably the least known of the eight. His Carrington Pembroke has deliberately remained a boutique, relying mainly on word of mouth for new business. He has become a specialist in esoteric areas such as emerging markets. He cautions to avoid fashionable or heavily promoted shares — again, as McLean says above in a different context, you are merely following the market.

Davis describes Jim Slater as "a man who could charm the birds off the trees". This is, perhaps, a better accolade for a travelling snake-oil salesman than for an investment guru, and some who have regretted their dealings with Slater in the past might push the parallel further. He has his own list of essential criteria which he uses to narrow down his initial selections to a pick of growth shares.

Mark Mobius, known as "the Indiana Jones of the investment world", is another seeker after the esoteric, regarded as the world's number one authority on emerging markets. He argues for a genuine, long-term approach — including the acceptance that you may not be able to get out quickly from markets that turn down suddenly, a telling message in the light of the Asian collapse.

The conclusion Davis reaches is that no single approach to success emerges. Some are risk-averse players of hunches, some so cautious they analyse every piece of data available. This spread of approaches is hardly surprising — if there was one true path, everyone would take it.

Money Makers, by Jonathan Davis, is published by Orion Business Books, price £20.



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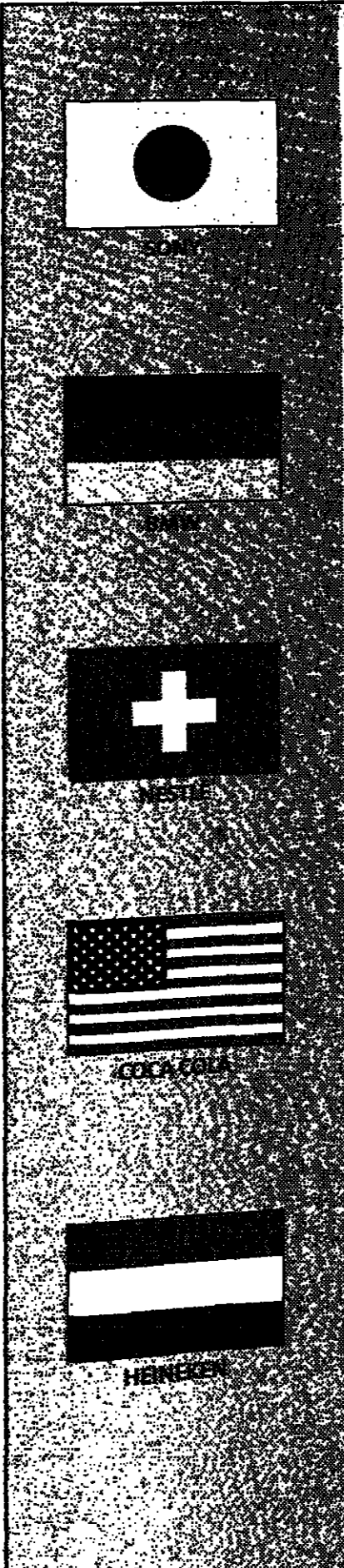
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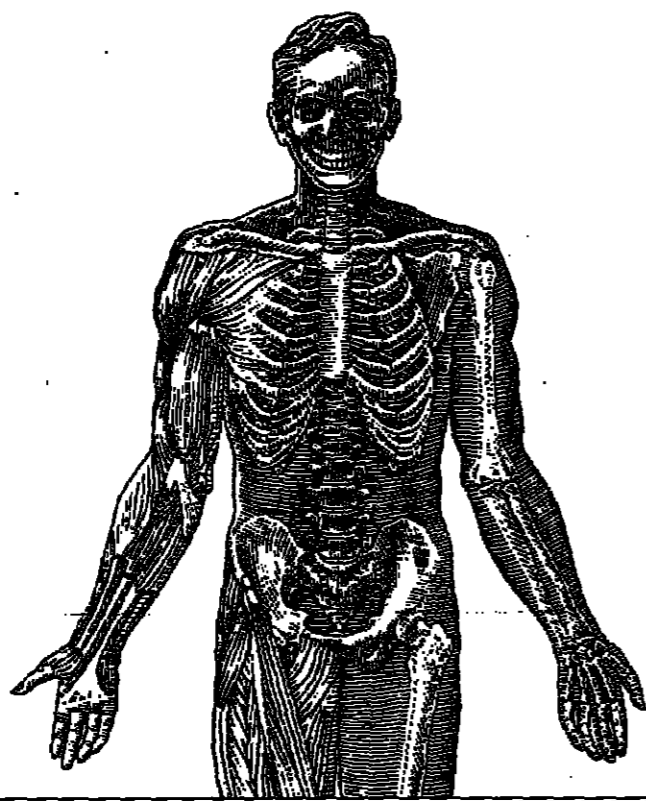
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Loans that are only half bad



A £50 a month endowment policy taken out when President Nixon visited China in February 1972 would now pay £100,000

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Endowment mortgages, once the most popular means of repaying a home loan, have suffered a serious setback in recent years, mainly through fears that they would not repay the loan at the end of the mortgage term.

In 1992, 73 per cent of loans were with an endowment policy, while 15 per cent were repayment, or capital-and-interest loans. Currently, only 35 per cent are endowments, while 39 per cent are repayments, according to the Council of Mortgage Lenders.

A report published recently by the Faculty and Institute of Actuaries is likely to increase the unpopularity of endowments, because it says payments from endowments maturing in the future could be half those taken out 25 years ago.

A £50 endowment policy started in 1972 when President Nixon made his historic trip to China is currently maturing and paying out around £100,000, while a similar policy taken out in 1987 is forecast to produce between £40,000 and £50,000 at the end of its 25-year term.

This is because low inflation throughout the 1990s has meant lower investment returns. Over the past 25 years, the returns earned on the underlying investment in a with-profits fund have been around 17 per cent a year, at a time when inflation was around 6 per cent. This gave a real return of 11 per cent.

The faculty's report concludes these levels of growth are unsustainable and future returns are more likely to be 9 or 10 per cent which, if inflation is stable around 3 per cent, means a real return of 6 or 7 per cent.

Some policyholders who took out policies in the mid-1980s, based on very aggressive growth-rate assumptions, have already received letters from their insurance companies advising them that their policies might fall short at the end of the day. But Peter Nowell, chairman of the Life Board of the Faculty and Institute of Actuaries, says several million more policyholders may get similar letters in the next three or four years.

It is possible there are more people who, if we have poorish returns over the next few years, will have to top up their premiums to make sure they

Hazel Spink advises caution when deciding if endowment mortgages are a good prospect

can repay their mortgages. Insurance companies are watching this block of policies closely and will notify people in good time so they can build up to the right amount.

Does this mean endowments are a bad deal for homebuyers? The first thing to note is that these days endowment premiums are worked out on much more conservative growth-rate assumptions, laid down by the regulators.

Endowments are also criticised because of the large amount of interest borrowers repay during the term of the loan. This is because the capital amount that has been borrowed does not reduce. Certainly on first glance, endowment mortgages look staggeringly more expensive than repayment ones. For instance, a 25-year, £70,000 repayment mortgage, with an interest rate of 8.7 per cent, costs the borrower £103,849 in interest plus the £70,000 originally borrowed. The total is £173,849.

With an endowment, the borrower repays £152,250 of interest (an extra £48,401) plus the original £70,000, making a total of £222,250.

The premiums to the endowment policy would be £104.30 a month, adding £31,290 to the bill. The total is £253,540.

However, when the policy matures after 25 years it should pay off the original £70,000 bringing the bill back to £183,540, which is within £10,000 of the comparable repayment loan.

Someone taking out the repayment loan would have had to find a further £3,330 for term assurance, to repay the loan in the event of death, which brings the two much more into line.

It is important, however, to shop around for term assurance because premiums can vary.

In other words, costs of endowments and repayment mortgages are broadly similar and would-be borrowers should choose on the basis of their lifestyle, says Phillip Cartwright, a director of London & Country Mort-

gage mortgages are attractive because repayment of the loan is not dependent on the investment performance of a life office. The capital sum reduces throughout the term, reducing the amount of interest paid.

However, borrowers need to be aware that in the early years, very little capital is repaid. Typically, 19 years into a 25-year mortgage, only half the capital has been repaid. And many borrowers fall into the trap of taking out a new 25-year mortgage every time they move house, so that they are again paying lots of interest and very little capital.

Richard Verdin, a partner at Donnellsons, a firm of advisers, said: "The most important thing with a repayment mortgage is to maintain your position in terms of the time spent repaying your loan." Anyone with a repayment mortgage who moves house should take out the new loan for a shorter period of time.

"So, if the original loan was taken out for 25 years and the borrower moves after five years, the next loan should be taken out over 20 years.

"Endowment mortgages are an option for an individual in stable employment, who is likely to move house several times and is fairly cautious as far as investment contracts are concerned," he said.

On the other hand, repay-

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Hunt starts for young victims of mis-selling

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If the above happened to you, and you were under 35 at the time of the sale, you could be a victim of pensions mis-selling — and due some help.

This week, the Government and the Financial Services Authority (FSA), the chief City regulator, ordered the financial services companies to review personal pensions that fall within this category — younger policyholders.

It is the second phase of a campaign to compensate hundreds and thousands of people who have been mis-sold personal pensions. The Government believes that up to 1.8 million people, who were under the age of 35 at the time they started a pension plan, could be victims.

Many will now be in their late thirties or early forties.

As part of the drive to find these people and try to sort out the problems, the Government is spending millions of pounds on a television advertising campaign. It will feature an ostrich, to encourage policyholders not to bury their heads in the sand.

Already the industry is struggling to deal with possible compensation claims from more than 500,000 people. Understandably, these cases were considered to be higher priority than those who fall into this week's second stage of the review, because of the age of the claimants. Many were approaching retirement, or had already retired. Others died without receiving compensation.

Most companies now have made substantial progress in sorting out the compensation, but to give some idea of the scale of the problem the Government is facing, if phase one



Thirties sought, like TV's Beatie Edney and Holly Aird

and phase two are taken together, it is estimated that one in three people may have been mis-sold a personal pension.

Q How do I know whether I have been mis-sold a personal pension?

A You could be a victim if, when you bought your plan, you had access to an occupational scheme. You could also be one if you were encouraged to leave your company scheme, in favour of investing in a personal pension. Transferring benefits out

of an occupational scheme into a personal pension could also be construed as mis-selling.

Q How important is it to take action if I have been mis-sold a personal pension?

A Very important. Most employers make contributions to occupational schemes, but do not contribute to personal pensions, which means that you lose out. Many occupational schemes carry guarantees about the level of benefits. Personal pensions do

not carry the same guarantees.

Q If I think I have been mis-sold a personal pension, what should I do?

A If you think you are a victim of pensions mis-selling, contact the company that sold you the pension. As the financial services companies and the banks have been dealing with sorting out compensation for some time now, they should be able to give you some guidance about where you fit in the pensions review.

If you were sold a pension by an independent financial adviser, who has gone out of business, then your pension case will have to be dealt with by the Personal Investment Authority (PIA), the retail watchdog.

Q What action are the companies going to take to sort out their non-priority, or phase two, cases?

A The consulting document, released this week, recommends that the financial services companies contact by post those who fall within the second stage of the review. If they do not respond then the FSA recommends that companies should attempt to contact policyholders a second time.

Companies will not be making contact until after the industry has responded to the consultation document. It is unlikely, therefore, that policyholders will receive the letter until the end of this year or the beginning of next year. It is important that potential mis-selling victims then react quickly.

Q If I have been mis-sold a personal pension, what will happen?

A The financial services company concerned will try to reinstate people who have been mis-sold pensions back into their company schemes. If this proves impossible, the financial services company should offer a guarantee that the victim will not suffer any financial loss as a result of the sale once he or she retires.

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* Performance is calculated for the period from 31st May 1995 to 31st October 1997. The current performance figure for the period 31st May 1995 to 23rd January 1998 is 58.89%. UK 100 Companies Fund performance takes account of all charges and the difference in price at which you buy and sell units with income reinvested without the deduction of tax. The performance of the Fund includes an initial fee of 5%, this fee was reduced to zero on 23rd December 1995. Tessa performance is based on the average performance of a large selection of Tessa accounts for the whole period including Tessa accounts for which bonus schemes are applicable. The performance of deposit-based savings is based on the net return from the Halifax Solid Gold 30 Day notice account (minimum investment £5,000). Source: Reuters Handlight. The examples shown are for illustration purposes only, as lump sum investment of less than £100,000 was not available until February 1996.

* Source: Investors Chronicle, 16th January 1998. Marks and Spencer Unit Trust Management Limited, Regulated by IFA and the Personal Investment Authority. Registered Office: Michael House, Baker Street, London W1A 1DN. Registered in England: 2253009. A subsidiary of Marks and Spencer plc. Marks and Spencer Unit Trust Management Limited is part of the Marks & Spencer Financial Services Marketing Group which uses the business name Marks & Spencer Financial Services.

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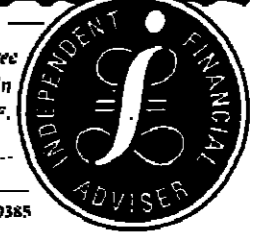
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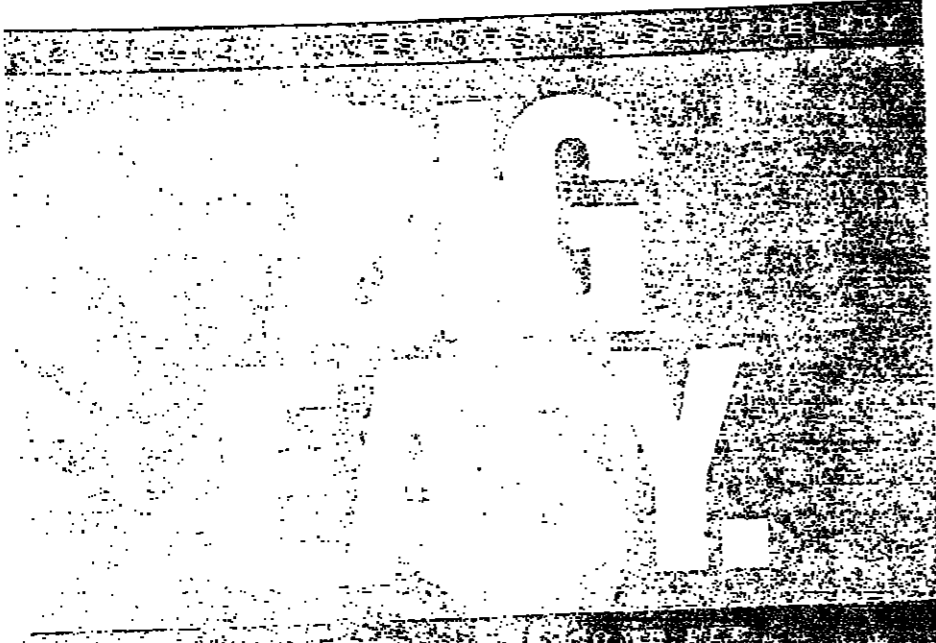
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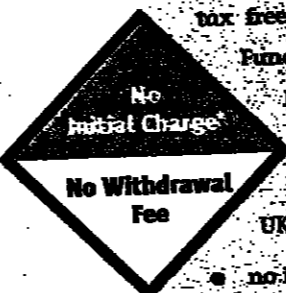


Giant Panda painted in acrylic on board in 1985 by Robert Bateman comes up in Christie's next sale, estimated at between £25,000 and £35,000

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Wildlife artists discover their own licence to print money

Buying originals may well be beyond the resources of some collectors, nor does everyone have the necessary house room to accommodate wildlife paintings which are often very large.

The artist David Shepherd is also well known for his conservation work and runs a charitable foundation to support wildlife projects around the world.

The foundation, through its mail order catalogue, sells a range of signed, limited edition prints of his work for £100-£900.

There is also a secondary market for these prints which may well be sought-after by collectors once the limited print run has ended. For the keen collector specialist exhibitions, such as the annual event held by the Society of Wildlife Artists in London in July, provide a good opportunity to see the work of a range of leading living artists. There are

also specialist galleries such as the Wildlife Art Gallery in Lavenham, Suffolk.

For more information about different painters and subjects, local museums frequently have good collections, while the Natural History Museum in London, which is more usually associated with dinosaur models, and fossils, is to open its own art gallery next year to display part of its extensive collection of wildlife paintings and drawings.

- CONTACTS**
- Christie's: 0171-581 7611
 - Bonhams: 0171-393 3900
 - Philips: 0171-629 6602
 - Society of Wildlife Artists: 0171-930 6844
 - Wildlife Art Gallery: 01787 248 562
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Animal art is burning bright

Buyers are showing big interest in auctions of wildlife paintings.
Clare Stewart studies the appeal of works depicting fur and feather

Tigers, giant pandas and a few elephants will be among the attractions at Christie's on April 24 when the auctioneer holds an important sale of wildlife art.

Such is the interest from collectors that Christie's has decided to hold two such sales a year, and a second auction is planned for October.

The estimated prices for the works to be sold range from £500 to £50,000. Among highlights is a painting of a giant panda by Robert Bateman, which has an estimate of £25,000 to £30,000. Two large canvases by Omra Sian, one showing an Indian tiger, and the other showing two rhinos, are expected to fetch £25,000 to £35,000 each. Proceeds from the sale of these are to go towards protection of endangered species.

Animals have long been a popular subject for artists, from historic portraits of country squires with a favourite hunting dog to contemporary artists such as David Hockney, whose most recent work features numerous studies of his dachshunds.

Equally, animal pictures have a strong following among collectors. You can be sure that pictures featuring cats will be snapped up first among the diverse selection on view at the Royal Academy's annual Summer Exhibition.

Such is the national interest in animals that collectors can choose from a wide range of work, at an equally wide range of prices. For those buying with an additional view to investment value too, it is a market in which demand has been strong and prices have held up well.

For the novice collector, the main advice offered by experts is to buy good quality, and to be guided by their own taste as to the painting, print or sculpture they can live with. In practice, dealers and auction houses say, collectors tend to buy pictures of the particular breed of cat or type of bird in which they have an interest.

The subject matter, as well as the name of the artist, will

have a bearing on the price you pay. For example, paintings of sheep are more popular than those of cattle, while racehorses are more in demand than heavy horses, according to Marcus Halliwell, head of 19th-century paintings at Phillips, the auctioneer.

Good-quality paintings of cats and dogs will always fetch a good price at auction because their subject matter is perennially popular.

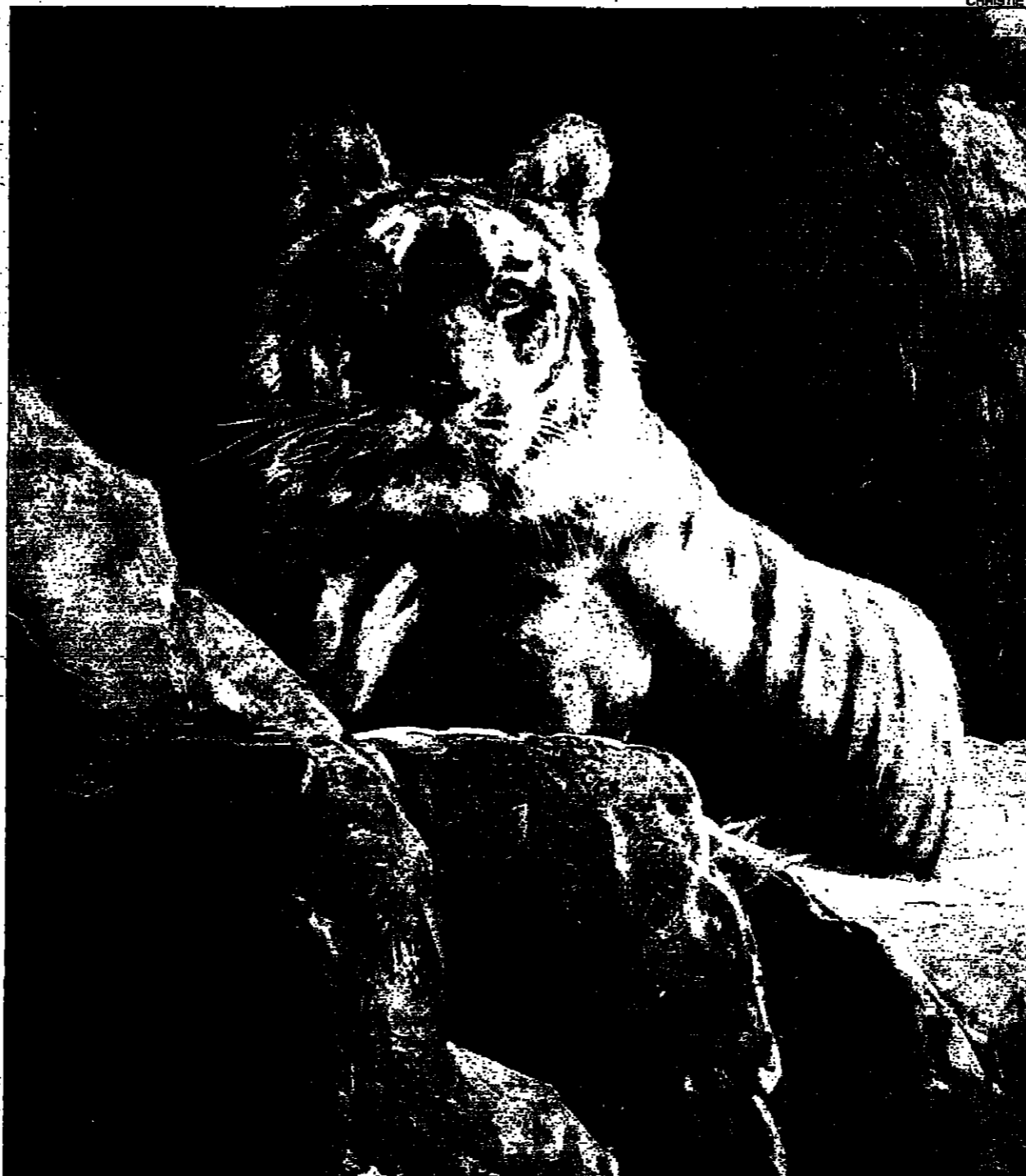
Bonhams, in London, runs an annual sale devoted to works of art featuring dogs, as well as what is described as dog ephemera, including, somewhat bizarrely, items such as dog collars. One of the highlights of a recent sale was a painting of two pointers by Thomas Blinks, which was estimated to fetch £10,000 to £15,000, but achieved a hammer price of £31,000.

Certain types of dog painting are always in demand, according to Charles O'Brien, head of Bonhams's 19th-century painting department. "Cute is king when it comes to 19th-century paintings," he said. "So, pictures of small dogs, such as King Charles spaniels, pugs and terriers, are popular."

At the lower end of the price range, collectors can find prints, pastels and bronzes. "Good-quality works will hold their value," said Mr O'Brien. He advises collectors to avoid pictures showing dead animals or featuring dogs in an aggressive stance. Breeds such as rottweilers and alsatians will be less popular than labradors or spaniels, and pictures showing a single breed of dog, rather than a mix of breeds, will be more saleable.

Away from domestic animals, paintings of game birds such as pheasant, grouse and ducks, are currently much in demand.

At a sale of wildlife art last month at Sotheby's in Sussex, a number of paintings of game-birds by the noted 19th-century artist Archibald Thorburn were sold for well above their estimated prices.



This fine oil on canvas, *Tiger on a Mountain*, by Wilhelm Frey, is expected to fetch £6,000 to £8,000 at Christie's

Thorburn paintings of sea birds and birds of prey were also snapped up, but achieved less impressive prices.

Kingsfishers and parrots are popular as subjects, said James Gadd, of Sotheby's, and works by well-known artists such as Sir Peter Scott also sell well.

Big cats are as popular as the domestic variety, to judge by the prices paid in recent sales. A painting by a famous artist such as David Shepherd is likely to cost you several thousand pounds, while works by lesser-known contemporary artists also achieve good prices, particularly if the animal is shown in an attractive context, such as asleep or in the sun. The oddlier the better, the experts say.

Sporting pictures may be less in demand, except where the name of the artist and the quality of the work are particularly important. John Dabney, of Phillips, said: "The peak of the sporting paintings market was in the late 1980s. Then political correctness kicked in and had an effect on prices. There is now a backlash and there has been an increase in interest over the last two to three years."

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The dogs you cannot trust

Karen Woolfson suggests unit trust holders should review their portfolios to trap poor performers

Investors lured into a personal equity plan because of tax-free incentives are advised not to take the performance of the funds for granted. Like any other investment vehicle, the unit or investment trusts held in your PEP need to be monitored.

In fact, you may be invested in what is known as a dog fund without realising it. This is a unit or investment trust held in a PEP that has shown a consistently poor performance compared with similar funds run by different managers.

M&G Smaller Companies, for example, has been among the worst performers over the past three years, so if you are exposed to a true "dog" it would be wise to assess your position.

Jason Hollands, the director of BEST Investments, says many investors do not realise that it is fairly easy and inexpensive to transfer out of a badly performing plan into a winner.

Investors would be wise to check their PEP portfolio before the Budget next Tuesday so that if necessary they can use up their £6,000 tax-free allowance for a general PEP and £3,000 for a single company PEP, but it may be too late. The risk is that Gordon

Brown, the Chancellor, may limit the tax relief on Peps to the amount already in a plan at midnight on Budget day.

Alternatively, Mr Brown may allow Peps to stay as they are until they cease to be offered, which under current proposals would be on April 5, 1999, while allowing tax relief to continue until October 5, 1999.

Whatever the Chancellor decides, he is expected to announce a watered-down version of his initial proposals for Peps. The industry believes he will allow existing PEP investors to retain the tax-free entitlement on part or the whole amount in the plan and for them to be entitled to the £50,000 lifetime ceiling on an individual savings account (ISA), the Chancellor's controversial new savings vehicle that will be introduced next year.

So if you do not act before the Budget, advisers suggest you take a careful look at your funds and strategy before the end of the tax year on April 5. You may decide you have enough money to use up your annual PEP allowance - if it is intact after the Budget.

Anthony Yadgeroff, managing director of Allenbridge Group, believes investors should assess their Peps at least once a year as it could save them thousands of pounds.

Charles Levett-Scrivener, associate director of Towry Law, agrees. He says if a PEP is underperforming or if it no longer meets your objectives, you should transfer to another PEP. "For example, if you were a growth investor and have now retired, you want to put your money into an income-producing fund instead."

Or, from an investment management point of view, your PEP may be heavily exposed to the UK, which has performed well over the past two years. You may be wise to rethink your geographic and sector exposure - in line with the buy low and sell high philosophy.

However, the main concern of "dog" PEP spotters is to weed out poorly managed funds and to guide investors into high performers which suit the degree of risk they want to take and the type of return they have in mind.

It is important to remember that a scientific approach acts as a filter but can never be a guaranteed assurance, thus investors must bear in mind the reality - unforeseen events can cause a fund to rocket or plummet, though this eventuality is likely to be ironed out over the long term.

Levett-Scrivener is in the business of identifying the real "dogs". He defines a "dog" PEP as one which is consistently bad or a shooting star type which may be number one in a sector over 12 months, but a year later is right at the bottom of the league tables because of a big bets strategy.

A typical manager is someone who runs a blue chip equity fund investing in FTSE 100 stocks, but does not hold a share like Glaxo which makes up a significant part of the index.

"People who take big bets have got a cult personality behind them and may get it right once, but the danger is they will take another big bet and get it wrong and the investor will suffer."

Hollands is another master of this art and produces a regular guide called *Spot the Dogs*, which highlights the worst PEP unit trusts over three year periods. He also produces a *Dog Guide* which makes identifying poorly performing funds a simple and surprisingly enjoyable task. His presentation of the whole subject is impressive and makes the dog-spotting exercise into a new type of art



Like Fagin, should you be reviewing your financial situation before the end of the tax year?

form.

He says the worst UK dog at present is Equitable Special Situations, which has underperformed by almost 35 per cent over the past three years. If £100 was invested in the fund three years ago it would now be worth just £132.93, whereas £100 invested in the FTSE All-Share index over the same period would now be worth £203.48. This fund has also consistently underperformed other similar funds and the index in each 12-month period during the three years to March 1998.

From March 1995 to March 1996, £100 placed in the fund would have grown to £114.68 as opposed to £129.49 from the FTSE All-Share index.

To find a dog, Hollands first looks at the fund performance for each of the past three years

person's track record elsewhere before taking a view. He takes into account a variety of other factors too, such as the manager's investment philosophy - which is crucial.

He also believes PEP investors should aim to create a balanced portfolio, bearing in mind the size of different markets around the world. If you take on board this perspective, the UK accounts for only 10.5 per cent of the world's market capitalisation while North America accounts for 49.1 per cent, Japan for 12.8 per cent and Europe as a whole for 32.5 per cent.

"It just shows that when an investor is 100 per cent exposed to one country they are gambling. So people who have no exposure outside the UK are seriously limiting their ability to make money, despite

Peptalk and it highlights the dog funds in red ink, so that investors can identify them at a glance.

"Anyone can look at past performance, but the whole purpose of what we're doing is to assess what will happen in the future, and we're trying to reduce the risk of picking a bad manager and increase the chance of picking a good manager to maximise returns."

Anthony Yadgeroff, managing director of Allenbridge Group, says his team of actuaries use detailed measures to compile a ranking table for the performance of each Peptalk fund. The top score that can be awarded is 30. He recommends that investors who hold funds that are given a score of under ten transfer into another one as soon as possible, while those given between 10 and 15 points should trigger a reassessment and those with 22 points and over are winners.

Apart from calculating a fund's cumulative return over three years, Yadgeroff's team look at the returns in each month of this three-year period in order to assess how volatile it is. If the fund is high-risk, high-return, then it is expected to fluctuate significantly, but to produce better returns than a low-risk, low-return fund over the long term. A fund is given three scores - one for its risk-adjusted return, one for consistency and one for cumulative returns. These are all added up to give the final score.

People who discover they are invested in a dog fund or who simply want to re-evaluate their PEP portfolio can obtain help from Allenbridge. (Freephone 0500 55 1000), BEST Investments, (0990-112 253), Towry Law (0345-868 244) or any other company that offers similar advice.

The PEP industry believes Brown will allow tax breaks for existing holders

and whether it meets the benchmark index in all three periods. If it fails, it meets the criteria. He then looks at the absolute performance across the three years and, to fall into the dog category, the fund must have underperformed its relevant index by 10 per cent or more. He finds that it is rarely helpful to look at the fund's five or ten-year performance as the fund manager will probably have changed over this time, which can give it an entirely different flavour.

Hollands emphasises that after looking at the figures, one has to assess the manager and team running the fund. If a new fund manager has just been appointed then there is the possibility a badly performing fund could be turned around, so his company would take a detailed look at that

the currency risk when one invests overseas. With the pound so strong at the moment it adds to the attractions of putting money abroad," says Hollands.

Funds in the doghouse with exposure outside the UK, include the worst European performer, Framlington Continental Smaller Companies which underperformed its relevant index by 33 per cent over three years. Meanwhile, the bottom ranking international fund is NPI Worldwide which shows a 27 per cent underperformance over the same period.

Christina Harry, head of the PEP department at Allenbridge Group, takes a slightly different approach though her firm also examines funds over the three-year period. Her company produces a monthly magazine called

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Gavin Lumsden looks at ways to make a packet out of cigarettes

Quit smoking, and light up savings

Why does the Chancellor hold the Budget in the spring? So he can remind smokers that they should have kept their new year's resolution and kicked the nicotine habit.

It has become an annual ritual to speculate about what the Chancellor will put in his Budget box. But for smokers one thing is depressingly certain. The price of cigarettes will go up.

As the anti-smoking lobby becomes ever more powerful, smokers are society's new pariahs, banned from the London Underground and consigned to the gritty corners of pubs and restaurants. Of course they can take some consolation from the fact that without the revenue from their nefarious activity there would be fewer hospitals, schools and essential public services. But that is not really convincing, is it?

If health reasons alone cannot compel you to give up the weed, let your wallet do the talking. A packet of 20 costs £3.20 on average. Smoking a packet a day works out at £1,000 a year or a staggering £10,000 over ten years — and that is before next Tuesday's Budget. Just think what you could do with that money.

If you're really feeling financially minded you could set up a regular savings scheme with the near extra £100 you would have each month. There are hundreds of savings accounts and Peps out there waiting for you if you do not know how to spend the money. Better tidied away in an account than going up in smoke.

There is another significant financial benefit of giving up smoking: cheaper insurance. Nearly all insurers will offer cheaper cover if you do not smoke or have not smoked for 12 months. However, strangely, some insurers classify cigar and pipe smokers as non-smokers. What do they think is in these things?

Take level term insurance, the simplest form of cover available. Here you pay a monthly premium to an insurance company and if you die within the term of the plan the insurer will pay out a lump sum to your family. According to Moneyfacts a 35-year-old male looking for 20-year cover of £50,000 can make substantial savings if he does not smoke.

For example, Abbey National will charge the man £20.52 a month if he smokes but will cut this to £12.85 if he does not. Zurich Life is cheaper but will charge the smoker £13.77 and the non-smoker just £9.64. The same principle applies to women. Over the 20 years, the difference between the best non-smoker premium and the worst smoker premium can be more than £4,000.

There are similar savings to be made when buying an endowment, an investment policy that includes life cover. Endowments are usually taken out by homebuyers who want to build up a lump sum that will pay off the mortgage.



Last gasp? Lauren Bacall, when smoking was deemed sophisticated, not dangerous

after 25 years. So give up smoking and you could have a cheaper mortgage.

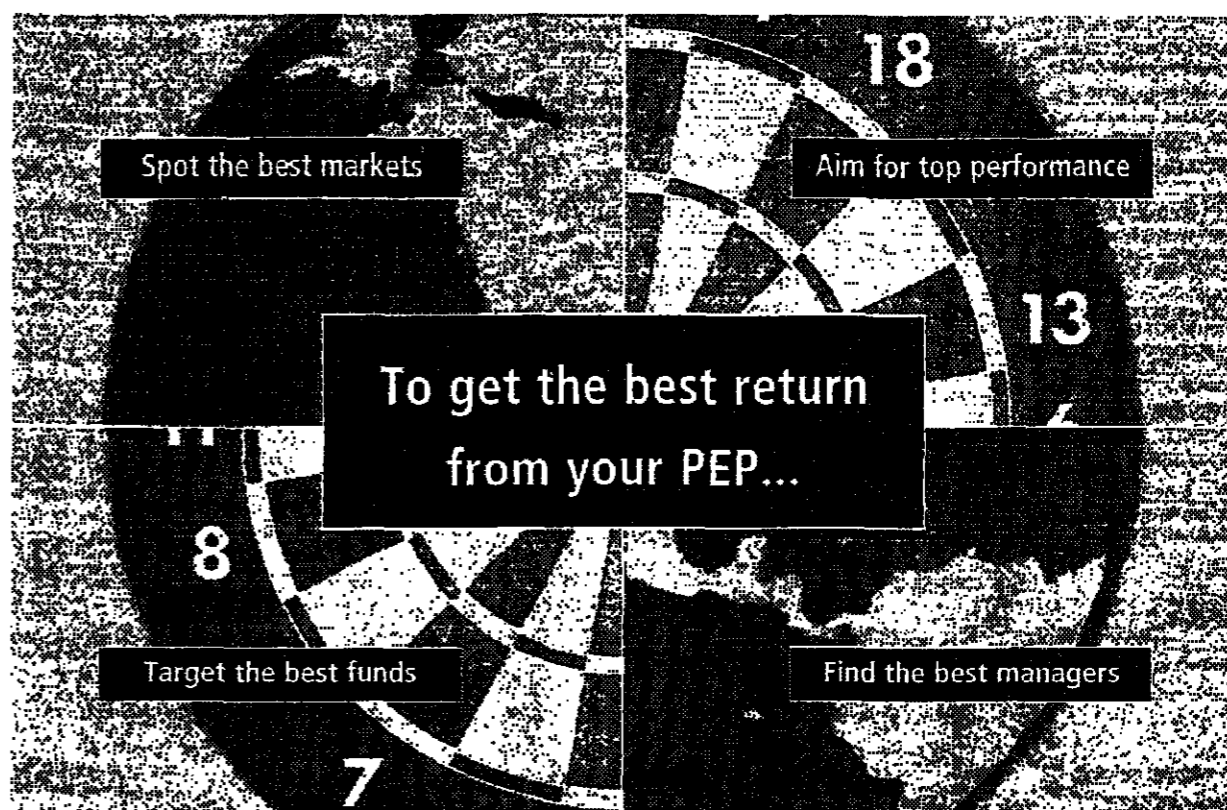
However, it can actually pay to smoke if you are about to stop working. If you have a personal or occupational pension and are about to retire you will be thinking of buying an annuity.

Annuities are another product provided by insurers. Basically you give your pension pot to them in return for which the insurers will pay you an annual income until you die. Some companies will pay a bigger annuity to smokers on the assumption that they are

unlikely to live as long as non-smokers. This is useful considering annuity rates are poor at the moment.

For example, a 65-year-old male smoker with a £100,000 pension pot will get a £10,610 annuity from Stalwart Assurance while a healthy non-smoking friend will get more than £12,000 a year less.

To get this benefit, pensioners have to declare they have smoked ten cigarettes a day for more than ten years. Stalwart says that it carries out spot-checks with doctors, so non-smokers should beware.



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60 WEEKEND MONEY

THE TIMES MONEY INFORMATION SERVICE

Offshore details go on the Net

Expatriate and UK investors can now receive information about offshore savings via the Halifax's new Internet Website...

Capital One Bank has launched a credit card designed exclusively for England football fans...

Guinness Flight's guide to investing in venture capital trusts explains the tax benefits...

Eight million parents want their children to go to university, but nine in ten have not made any financial provisions...

LIZANNE ROSE

GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS

Table with columns: Investment (£), Company, Standard Rate (%). Lists various guaranteed income bonds from companies like Hambro Assured, AIG Life, GE Fin Assur, etc.

Source: Chamberlain de Broi 0171-434-2222. Net rates. Income and capital guaranteed. Early surrender. Terms vary. Monthly income may be available.

SAVERS' BEST BUYS

Table with columns: Account, Notice of term, Deposit, Rate, Interest paid. Lists instant accounts and notice accounts/bonds from various banks.

Table with columns: Account, Notice of term, Deposit, Rate, Interest paid. Lists first TESSAS (tax free) accounts.

CREDIT CARDS BEST BUYS

Table with columns: Card type, Interest per month, APR%, Fee per annum. Lists credit cards from Capital One Bank, RBS, and Co-operative Bank.

PERSONAL LOANS BEST BUYS

Table with columns: Personal Loans, APR, Monthly payment on £5,000 for 3yrs no insurance. Lists personal loans from Northern Rock, Direct Line, and RBS.

NB: A = Minimum age 22 years, B = Operated by post or telephone, C = no interest free period, F = Fixed Rate, M = If insurance not arranged APR 12.7 per cent, N = Introductory rate for a limited period, P = Operated by Post, T = Operated by Telephone.

* RATES SHOWN ARE GROSS AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE. PLEASE CHECK RATES BEFORE INVESTING.

Source: Moneyfacts, The Monthly Guide to Investment & Mortgages (01922 600 677)

PIBS

Table with columns: Fixed Rate, Gross coupon, Buying price, Gross yield, Issue price, Minimum amount. Lists various PIBS from Birmingham Midshires, Bradford & Bingley, etc.

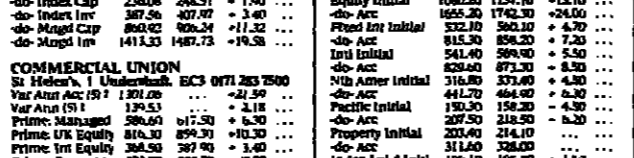
PERPETUAL SUBORDINATED BONDS

Table with columns: Lender, Interest rate, Loan size, Max %, Notes. Lists perpetual subordinated bonds from Hincley & Rugby, Bank of Ireland, etc.

NB: 1 compulsory products, buildings and contents insurance, 2 buildings insurance only.

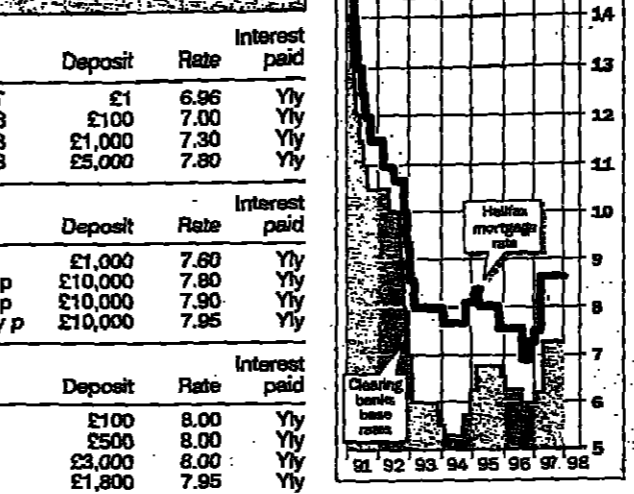
Source: Greenwich WorldWide

SHARE IN FOCUS: ORANGE



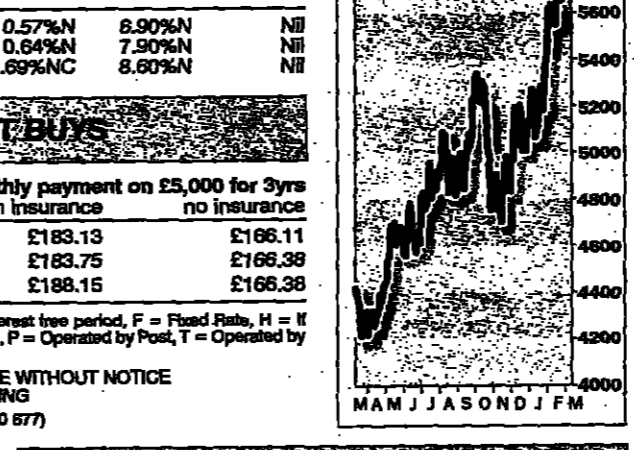
SHARE IN FOCUS: ORANGE BRINGING ALL THE RIGHT NUMBERS

BASE RATES & MORTGAGES



BASE RATES & MORTGAGES

FTSE 100 PRICE INDEX



FTSE 100 PRICE INDEX

MAM J JASON D J F M

SAVINGS

Table with columns: Gross rate, All tax rates, Minimum investment, Notice, Contact. Lists various savings products like Ordinary A/c, Investment A/c, etc.

All figures are the gross annual annuity (£100,000 purchase), guaranteed 5 years, paid monthly in advance.

SINGLE LIFE (level ann)

Table with columns: Male: Age 60, Age 65, Age 70. Lists single life annuities from Sun Life, Canada Life, etc.

SINGLE LIFE (level annuity)

Table with columns: Female: Age 60, Age 65, Age 70. Lists single life annuities for females from Sun Life, etc.

JOINT LIFE, 2/3 WIDOWS

Table with columns: Male: Age 60, Age 65, Age 70. Lists joint life annuities from Sun Life, etc.

Source: Annuity Direct (0171 684 5000)

Statistics compiled by Lizanne Rose

BUYERS

Table with columns: Lender, Interest rate, Loan size, Max %, Notes. Lists various buy-to-let mortgage products from Bank of Ireland, etc.

NB: 1 compulsory products, buildings and contents insurance, 2 buildings insurance only.

Source: Greenwich WorldWide

Up to 7.60% gross p.a. for six months.

Advertisement for Bristol & West PLC bond, offering up to 7.60% gross p.a. for six months.

UNIT LINKED FUNDS

Table with columns: Bid, Offer, Why % up/down. Lists various unit-linked funds from AGON LIFE ASSURANCE, ABBEY LIFE, BLACK HORSE LIFE, etc.

UNIT LINKED FUNDS

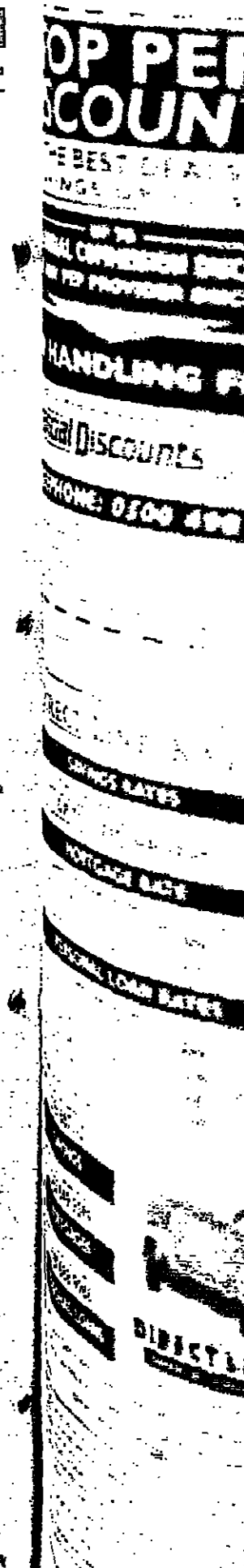
Table with columns: Bid, Offer, Why % up/down. Lists various unit-linked funds from GUARDIAN ROYAL EXCHANGE, HAMBRO ASSURED, LEGAL & GENERAL UNIT ASSURANCE, etc.

UNIT LINKED FUNDS

Table with columns: Bid, Offer, Why % up/down. Lists various unit-linked funds from LONDON LIFE, LONDON & MANCHESTER ASSURE, M&G, etc.

UNIT LINKED FUNDS

Table with columns: Bid, Offer, Why % up/down. Lists various unit-linked funds from OLD MUTUAL, PRUDENTIAL, ROYAL HERITAGE LIFE ASSURANCE, etc.



WEEKEND MONEY LETTERS

Rise in interest rates is pensioners' lifeline

From Mrs R. Lipscombe
Sir, May I comment on the understandable desire of government, businesses, mortgage payers etc to have lower interest rates.

no alternative when this happens but to draw on savings capital (which we try to keep in reserve for home or residential care) to meet household expenses which are the same for pensioners as for those in employment.

Isas and the ethic of investment

From Mr P. G. Dowty
Sir, In all the talk and print on Isas and the fate of Peps and the retrospective limitations - one point seems entirely forgotten - the rationale behind Peps was to encourage the public to invest in UK private enterprises.

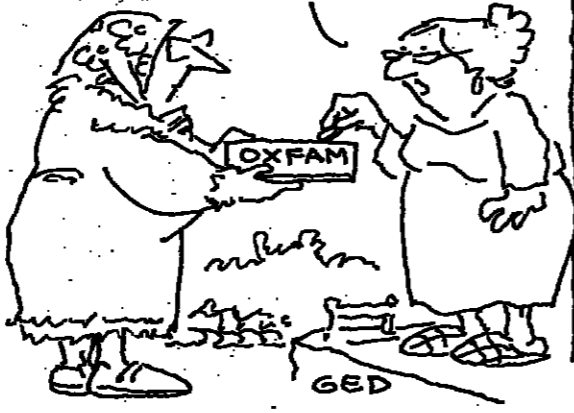
A means test called taxation

From Mr Jack Canty
Sir, In her article (Britain gets in a state over the basic pension, February 28) Hazel Spink says there is speculation that the basic state pension will be scrapped or mean-tested. It does not seem to be generally appreciated that this benefit is already subject to a means test - it's called "taxation".

Brown should abolish inheritance tax

From Mr T. J. Whitfield
Sir, Your article, (Aim to act before Brown's Budget, February 21) by Marianne Curphey and Anne Ashworth, gave some excellent suggestions for pre-Budget planning. However, it was disappointing not to find any suggestion that inheritance tax should be abolished, and indeed that it might be increased to 50 per cent.

You'll have to settle for the widows half mite... thanks to IT.



old adage states, "you cannot make the poor rich by making the rich poor". Yours faithfully,

T. WHITFIELD, 12 Plough Close, Street, Somerset, BA16 0UF.

Means-testing

From Mr R. W. Bellhouse
Sir, Regarding Mr J. R. Batstone's letter "State pension for those near retirement" (February 21), I too have serious concerns about the Government's intentions regarding possible means-testing of the state pension.

A RISE in interest rates was prevented last month by Eddie George, the Governor of the Bank of England, who used his casting vote on the Monetary Policy Committee when the eight members were divided evenly on the issue.

THE WEEK IN MONEY

2005. Members' benefits are guaranteed, and taxpayers may have to make good the shortfall.

defeat, although the bank, which has offered £630 million, was adamant that it remained on course to complete the purchase.

dual system for operating the Isa, because policing the two systems would be difficult. The Government is believed to have already abandoned its proposed £50,000 lifetime limit on Isas.

PRIVATISATION of the water industry nine years ago has left one of its pension funds £419 million in the red, the National Audit Office said. The pension fund, which has 33,000 members will run out of money in

HALIFAX trumped the Royal Bank of Scotland's agreed takeover bid for Birmingham Midshires Building Society by offering £780 million, a premium on the price of around 25 per cent. There was growing speculation that RBS will have to concede

SOURCES close to the Treasury say that Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General, is now suggesting a "mini" and a "maxi" individual savings account (Isa). However, the Inland Revenue is known to be fighting against the

IT emerged on Monday that Lloyds TSB is negotiating the sale of its Black Horse estate agency to Bradford & Bingley Building Society. Lloyds was the first bank to venture into estate agency in 1982 when it set up Black Horse which has around £35 million in net assets.

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A booming market does not necessarily preclude disaster

Matthew Wall pays another visit to the investment clubs Weekend Money follows and finds they have contrasting fortunes

The stock market's recent record levels may indicate boom time for private investors. But as *The Times* drops in once more on our two investment clubs, the Maydown Mergers in London, Northern Ireland, and the Victoria Investment Club in Truro, Cornwall, it seems that a surging market does not preclude the odd disaster.

For example, the Maydown Mergers are still reeling from the sharp reversal of their linchpin stock, Powerscreen, an engineering company, which hit difficulties in January after "accounting irregularities" were unearthed at Matbro, one of its subsidiaries. But instead of panicking and bailing out, the plucky Mergers have taken the share price drop as an opportunity to buy more of a company in which they firmly believe.

They bought 550 more shares at 27p, less than half the price it was six weeks ago. With hindsight, they wish they had waited longer, since the price fell further to around 21.6p now. The gamble means they are sitting on a potential loss of nearly £1,500.

Mike Carroll, club chairman, says: "This story took everyone by surprise - even the City experts. We still believe Powerscreen is a good, strong company. We're banking on the auditors not finding any more bad news, but we also think the low share price makes the company a prime takeover target - JCB has been tipped as a possible predator. The club was split

down the middle on the decision to buy more though. In the end, democracy won the day."

The club has ditched slow-moving Fortune Oil and Crest Nicholson, making around £600 profit. The cash was needed to buy out two club members who are moving away from the area. As a result further share purchases have been put on hold temporarily.

The club currently has its eye on CIG and Universal Ceramics, building materials companies. The directors have been buying shares in their companies, which the club believes may be an indication of good results to come.

They still hold stubbornly on to loss-makers Airtech, Chiroscience and Pace Micro in the hope that speculation will reap rewards over the year. Profits remain static at £699.98 and the unit price is 1.21, representing a 21 per cent increase over two years.

Victoria, the investment club veterans, are sitting pretty. Last month they rubbishly dispatched their poor performers Linx Print Technology and Gowings at a loss of £460, but bought 9,393 more shares in Mice Group, the exhibitions company. The £1,200 investment has already proved itself to be a sensible move, with profits now more than £1,000.

Derek Richards, former chairman, says ruefully of Gowings: "It was one of the very few occasions when we took a tip from someone in the City. He said it would do wonders. Let's hope it is the



Decisions, decisions: where money is at stake in the Victoria Investment Club, the discussion tends to get a little lively

last time we take a tip. There is no substitute for your own research and common sense." This is a lesson that both clubs have now learnt.

Victoria Investment Club's portfolio is now completely free of loss-makers and its unit value of 1.86 is the highest it has ever been, reflecting the record levels of the stock market. DBS Management, the independent financial adviser network, a new acquisition, is already showing a £272.99 profit, and Robert Walters, the computer personnel recruitment agency and its star performer, continues to shine.

The portfolio, at more than £30,000, is about £1,500 higher than in January when we last visited them. However, success is making a number of club members nervous. They are itching to take profits, especially in the run-up to the Budget on March 17.

There is a robust debate going on between those who want to sit on a pile of cash for a while until the dust settles, and those who think there is little point selling strongly performing shares only to buy them back later at a higher price.

The next club meeting on Tuesday promises to be a lively affair with Derek Richards, a diehard believer in staying fully invested, accepting that a decision to bank profits on selected stocks is looking likely. In a democracy you do not always get your own way.

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Bodycote	113	1042.50p	163.21
Chiroscience	113	282.50p	-241.905
Galen Holdings	256	481.50p	735.27
Go-Ahead Group	300	554.0p	185.15
Meyflower	1,150	218.50p	1,214.25
Norwich Union	364	476.25p	518.99
Pace Micro	1748	40.50p	-311.88
Powerscreen	682	216.50p	-1,587.01
Woolwich	332	376.0p	238.08

Portfolio at 12.3.98 worth £13,662.20. National profit £939.98

Company	Shares	Price now	Profit/loss (£)
Weasol	5818	60.00p	1,219.30
Media Business Group	2000	101.00p	799.00
Dolphin Packaging	859	254.50p	686.175
Mice Group	18930	16.25p	1,002.575
Television Corporation	875	217.50p	97.875
Fortune Oil	9762	12.25p	6.525
RPS Group	750	284.00p	377.12
Robert Walters	600	338.50p	2,776.48
UNICO	288	417.00p	482.31
Isotec	480	537.50p	476.17
Taylor Nelson	4008	102.00p	1,347.53

Portfolio at 12.3.98 worth £36,468.13. National profit of £45,113.92

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Indications are that the Chancellor will target company cars to raise taxes and improve the state of the environment

Brown's tax drive for green transport policy

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, is almost certain to increase the taxation on company cars in this year's Budget. The Government is committed to green issues, and any changes that make it less attractive for employers to offer company cars as a perk of the job would fit in with this philosophy.

Caroline Merrell on possible routes the Chancellor may follow on Budget day

miles a year, and another third for those who do more than 18,000 business miles a year. One measure that the Government could use to increase the tax take is to widen these bands. However, this could increase the number of unnecessary miles that many business drivers are believed to do each year. For instance, someone whose business mileage is just under 2,500 could save a third of their tax by driving for a few extra miles.

Such a move could herald the end of the two-car family - the much talked-about goal of John Prescott, the Transport Secretary.

workplace parking spaces and three and a half million more visitor spaces at shops and hospitals throughout Britain. Levying an annual £100 sum could raise up to £650 million. James Rodger, an automotive consultant at KPMG in Birmingham, said that Budget changes could dovetail with the Government's White Paper. He said: "They would charge those with car parking spaces the equivalent of the local NCP car parking rate." NCP rates vary up and down the country. A three-month parking permit in the West End of London will cost around £1,500, while in Colchester the same permit will cost a tenth as much. A recent survey of London-based companies showed that most felt that an annual charge of £1,000 was thought acceptable.

The Government is unlikely to want to scrap company car perks altogether - to do so could be extremely harmful for the country's car industry. About 56 per cent of all new cars sold in the UK are company cars, many of which will be made in the UK. At the moment, anyone who drives a company car will have to pay tax on only 35 per cent of the list price of the car, unless the car is more than four years old. The amount of tax payable on the car will then be reduced by a third.

However, according to KPMG, the Government is keen to target those people that do not use their car for work

	9hrs	12hrs	Season (12mths)
London West End	27.00	28.00	1,487.85
London City	15.80	22.00	1,001.10
London Shippards Bush	5.00	5.00	211.50
Brighton Town Centre	7.50	9.50	503.15
Manchester Town Centre	7.50	9.50	503.15
Manchester Town Centre	6.00	7.50	384.00
Preston Town Centre	3.90	4.70	190.35
Colchester Town Centre	0.39	4.00	10,819.58
	a=11hrs, b=9hrs		

Other reductions on the amount of tax paid on company cars will apply if business mileage is high. For instance, the tax on company cars is reduced by a third for those who do more than 2,500

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Counting the cost of a good smoke

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Graham Searjeant considers the overseas portfolio



Middle England to bear the brunt

Next Tuesday Gordon Brown delivers his second Budget of his 11-month career as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Class of abstemious mineral water to hand, he is expected to squeeze Middle England to pay for the Welfare to Work measures that form the centrepiece of his economic strategy.

Also forecast are a series of provisions that will limit the activities of the tax avoidance industry, one of the most entrepreneurial sectors of the British economy. Some 200 separate avoidance ruses are to be shot down. Included in this number are an assortment of capital gains and inheritance tax loopholes.



Jonathan and Fiona Bowes with three-week-old Imogen. Her birth has altered their views on economic priorities

Childcare is the top of the Budget agenda for Jonathan and Fiona Bowes of South London. Three weeks ago the couple had their first child, Imogen, and are already thinking carefully about her future.

Babycare becomes the big issue now

The Bowes appreciate the £10 child benefit they get for Imogen every week from the State and want the Government to retain the benefit's universality. However, they believe it could be tapered so that poorer parents got more.

occupant. One day soon the place will grind to a halt. On tax the couple would welcome lowering the basic rate of income tax to 10p but Mr Bowes, 32, fears the Chancellor may increase national insurance to make up the revenue shortfall.

Mr Bowes, a financial adviser, says: "The Government is committed to not raising personal taxation but seems to be raising it indirectly." He cites pensions. In his last Budget the Chancellor prevented pension funds reclaiming income tax on dividends from shares.

GAVIN LUMSDEN

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WEEKEND MONEY is edited by Anne Ashworth

New Labour should support the thrifty



Belinda Webster wants action on Isas

Belinda Webster, recently retired after a varied career, has paid off her mortgage, does not smoke, drinks very little and does not drive. She has no intention of using any of the capital gains or inheritance tax loopholes that the Chancellor is set to close.

who have had the foresight to provide for themselves in their retirement. Mrs Webster has been paying close attention to every leak and rumour about Isas. There is a possibility, for example, that mini and maxi Isas may be available, allowing investors to have more than one Isa manager each year.

JACQUI SPRAY

Disabled by Budget cutbacks

Henry Stone is disillusioned with new Labour. The 24-year-old Oxford University law graduate fears the Government's idea of Welfare to Work is no alternative to disability living allowance (DLA) and that the Chancellor's Budget on Tuesday will do little to help him to cope with the practical problems he faces because of cerebral palsy.



Henry Stone: "Many claimants understate their needs"

Henry Stone has just graduated and is in the process of trying to find a job either in IT or as a management consultant while working as an advice worker at the Disability Information and Support Centre in Plymouth.

general for a claimant to give concise and complete answers as well as deeply personal. Contrary to popular belief this acts as a barrier to many potential claimants, who generally understate their needs.

SUSAN EMMETT

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THE TIMES

WEEKEND

SATURDAY MARCH 14 1998

A third of our lives is spent asleep, yet most of us feel that we need more. So is there a solution?



How to get a perfect night's sleep

One of the best things about a good night's sleep is the joy of waking up refreshed and re-stored, and feeling energetic and alert all day long. But poor sleep causes sleepiness, which leads to accidents, lack of job satisfaction, bad moods and inadequate social skills. Poor sleep also affects our overall health and survival: our hearts, brains and digestive systems suffer. Anyone — even someone who does not have a sleep disorder — can improve his or her sleep for lasting benefits to health and

well-being. With better sleep, you will avoid the problems that result from poor sleep and also continue to sharpen and brighten your wakefulness. There will be a bonus of a surprisingly large improvement in almost everything you do. Yet only about one in five of us sleeps well with little effort. The rest of us need to work at it. Whichever way you look at it, sleep occupies an impressively large part of our lives. We sleep for almost a third of our time on this planet — about 23 years. We spend more time asleep than we spend working, looking after

children, exercising, talking or watching television. We spend more intimate time with ourselves in sleep than with all our lovers or spouses, and there is a good chance that we will also be lucky enough to die in our sleep. Whatever else, sleep is a dominating feature of our life on earth. What do we mean by "sleep"? Many of us think of sleep as a period of nothingness, somewhere between turning out the light and the alarm clock going off in the morning. But sleep is not nothingness. It is not like putting the car in the garage, turning off the engine,

closing the doors and leaving it until morning. When we are asleep, things happen and these are different from the kinds of things that take place during the day. In sleep, our brains, cells and digestion can be as active as they were during the day and our hearts can beat as fast. Sleep is not a "mini-death". Nor is sleep the same as resting. Resting is a passive, gentle form of wakefulness. When we rest, we are still awake. When we rest, we are responsive and alert. When we are asleep, we are largely unconscious or unresponsive: we lose sensa-

tion, the ability to think properly and our short-term memory. Sleep happens spontaneously, and is not just a response to things that happen to us. Somewhere in our brains or bodies exist systems that decide how much sleep we need and when that sleep should occur. Sleep is not imposed on us like anaesthesia or hypnosis. Sleep is rapidly reversible. It is possible, and usual, to be deeply asleep, yet within minutes to be fully awake. So sleep is

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ROBERT HARDING



Early afternoon is a good time for sleep, when the body temperature is high enough to allow the metabolic rate to slow down and drowsiness to take over. This is also the reason why one often feels sleepy after eating a large lunch

WHY DO WE NEED EIGHT HOURS?

YOU HAVE been told that you need at least eight hours of sleep each night, but you rarely get that much. Should you be concerned?

Decide how much sleep you need from the way you feel and perform during the day. If you feel fine, you are probably getting enough sleep. Different people need different amounts of sleep, depending on their personality, character and habits.

You might feel that because you have trouble getting to sleep, or returning to sleep, you should spend longer in bed. However, this may prevent you becoming sleepy enough to get to sleep. It will also stretch what sleep you do get, reducing its quality and making it even easier for you to have a disturbed night.

Are you allowing yourself enough time to sleep? Do you spend too much time tossing and turning? Too often the pressure is on you to be awake for as long as possible, whether for work or children or because of poor sleep. Just make sure you have the right opportunity for good-quality, consolidated sleep. Too little time means the quality of your sleep will deteriorate as you spread your sleep too thinly.

How much time, on average, are you actually asleep each 24 hours? Add up all your hours of sleep for the past week and divide the total by seven. Include naps and dozing in front of the television, and make sure you allow for the extra hours that you slept last weekend. Do not include time that you spent in bed when you were awake.

Next, add up how much time you spend awake but ready for sleep. For most people, this is the time that they spend in bed. Do not count the time when you have no intention of being

asleep (for example, when you are reading or watching television in bed).

Do count the time outside bed if you are asleep, dozing or trying to sleep — for example, sleeping on the sofa. Again, work out your daily average for the past week and then round your answer up or down to the nearest 15 minutes.

Now you can calculate your preferred time in bed. We say "in bed" because in most cases it is better if you are sleeping in bed than, for example, in an armchair when watching television. There are several possibilities and you will need to choose the one that is most appropriate for you.

If you are often too sleepy when you are awake, but have little trouble getting to sleep, add half an hour to your daily opportunity to sleep.

If you are too sleepy during the day and have trouble sleeping in bed, add an hour of your daily time spent sleeping to your preferred time in bed. If you are never sleepy when you are awake but have trouble sleeping at night, add half an hour to your preferred time in bed.

YOUR GOAL is to be in bed for your preferred time. Think about specific ways in which you will accomplish this: for example, by not watching the late news, or by being in bed around 10pm. If there is a huge difference between your sleep patterns and your preferred time in bed, at least commit yourself to a daily improvement of even as little as ten minutes towards your goal.

If you have difficulty getting to or staying asleep, it is well worth sticking to your preferred time in bed every day. Otherwise it is OK to sleep a little longer at weekends rather than during the week.

Continued from page 1
different from hibernation or a coma. Sometimes, especially when we are drowsy, it is not clear if we are asleep or not. Sleep can intrude into wakefulness in tiny episodes lasting only a few seconds ("microsleeps"). A single micro-sleep can kill a sleepy driver (if you nod off for five seconds at 70mph, you can travel almost 200 yards), yet you may experience only a slight startle as you wake up again.

A typical night's sleep is not one uniform period of sleep. It is actually made up of four or five sleep cycles. Each cycle is an episode of sleep lasting between 90 and 120 minutes in which there is a gradual deepening of sleep and then a return to light sleep, or sometimes brief wakefulness. The structure of these sleep cycles contributes to what sleep does and to how it goes wrong.

Within each sleep cycle, there are two main types of sleep.

Quiet sleep is the type of sleep in which the brain is at its most inactive. Not everything stops, however. The body is immobile and losing heat, so there might be some sweating. Some glands are busy secreting hormones and some digestion occurs. Some, but not all, cells are busy making proteins that may contribute to the repair of our bodies after a long day of activity.

The heart and circulation are under less stress in good Quiet sleep than when we are awake. Blood pressure, heart rate and breathing rates are at their lowest values, so the heart works less hard. Urine production is down, so going to the bathroom more than once during the night is a sure indication of disturbed sleep. The brain is not very active. There are large, slow brainwaves, which are a good sign that not much is going on. Some people's Quiet sleep is polluted by evidence of wakeful activity. They have unsatisfactory

sleep and awaken unrefreshed and tired. The disruption takes the form of electrical waves, known as alpha waves, which wash over the usual brainwaves of Quiet sleep.

The second and most distinctive type of sleep is REMS (rapid eye-movement sleep), which occurs near the end of the four or five sleep cycles. Episodes of REMS last about 30 minutes, becoming longer and closer together towards the end of the night. In REMS, the brain is active — so active in fact that the body has to be mostly paralysed to prevent the damage that would occur if we acted out our dreams. This combination of an active brain in an immobile body so mystified the early sleep researchers that they called this state "active sleep" or "paradoxical sleep".

There are several other interesting things that happen when we are in REMS. We lose our ability to control our temperature and shivering and sweating cease. Our heartbeat and breathing become faster and more erratic. Because of the paralysis of the muscles which control our ribs, we have to rely on our diaphragm to breathe, and this can be a serious problem for some obese people. Blood flows to the sexual organs of men and women, and men have erections. Doctors have used this phenomenon to study impotence: if he has an erection in REMS, the patient does not have a physical problem.

Our pattern of eating is important because our digestive systems are partly controlled by our natural biological rhythms. These natural rhythms allow us to anticipate large meals by providing enzymes before the food arrives to aid digestion. Unfortunately for shift workers, if meals are not eaten at the right times, these digestive substances take out their frustration on an empty stomach and then



Different people need different amounts of sleep, depending on their personality and lifestyle

the food that is eventually eaten is less effectively digested.

What, and when, we eat also influences heartbeat and acid reflux, the cause of many shift workers and a disruptive influence on sleep. Gastro-oesophageal reflux occurs when acid escapes from the stomach and comes back towards the mouth. On the way it burns the delicate tissues of the oesophagus, causing heartburn. It may stimulate nerves, causing coughing, or reach the entrance to the lungs causing choking. If it reaches the mouth, you may vomit. Eating a large meal within two hours of bedtime can increase your metabolic rate and your body temperature at a time when they should be decreasing. This makes it

harder to get to sleep at bedtime. Strangely, it is easier to feel sleepy after eating a meal earlier in the day. This is because your body temperature is already high and the increased effort of digesting food promotes inactivity and sleepiness.

The longer we have been awake, the more we need to sleep and the more likely we are to fall asleep. This makes sense. But if we slept whenever we accumulated a sleep debt, we would be continuously falling asleep. Our sleep patterns would resemble those of a newborn baby: sleep, eat, smile, sleep, eat, smile. As adults, it makes more sense to time things so that we sleep at night when our waking activities are limited, work in the morning

when our minds and bodies are fresh, and relax in the evening.

How do we accommodate this kind of patterning and impose some structure on the other physiological activities that need to be correctly timed? Each of us has a basic or biological rhythm of body temperature, highest after midday and lowest at 3am to 5am. This does not depend on what we do, but is reset each day by the sun's light.

Under normal circumstances, our sleep is synchronised to this pattern and we find it easier to fall asleep when our temperature is falling in the late evening, and easiest to wake up when we are warming up in the morning.

This is why most people like to fall asleep between 10pm and midnight, and why night workers who go to bed at 8am often wake up, to their frustration, between 11am and 1pm. The early afternoon is a second opportunity for sleep.

POWER NAPPING AND DREAMS



We dream throughout the whole time that we are asleep

POWER NAPPING is an effective and under-used tool. It is a quick, intense nap which dramatically improves alertness. These naps are especially useful for those whose sleep is constrained by a busy schedule: for example, mothers with small children, or travelling business executives. However, the details must be right and they do require some practice if they are to be used to maximum effect.

Power naps should be short, to prevent grogginess on awakening (which has been called "sleep inertia"). The exact duration of the nap is a matter of choice, but most people prefer naps lasting between 10 and 25 minutes. Some people believe they cannot fall asleep in such a short time, but it is simply a question of practice. At first, it is more important to relax and be quiet for a while than actually to fall asleep. That can come later.

Power napping is not a good idea if you have a hard time awakening at the designated time (it is fine to use an alarm clock), or if you have difficulty sleeping at night after having a power nap in the day. The kind of dozing that accompanies unwelcome sleepiness is not a power nap. That kind of sleep is a desperate attempt to compensate for a poor sleep routine, not a genuine use of creative sleep.

Power naps should be practised. To begin with, try power napping only before relatively unimportant events. As your skills improve, you will find you can use them to enhance your alertness and performance at times when they are needed most.

DREAMS: We dream throughout sleep, from the first moments until the last. This is a fairly recent discovery. For a long time it was thought that dreams were confined to REM sleep. Before then it was generally believed

that we had dreams only in the few minutes before we woke up.

No one completely understands what purpose dreams serve, although it is clear that when we dream our brains are active. Dream theorists have put forward all kinds of ideas about their function, from parallel universes to random, meaningless neural signals. Most people feel happiest with the middle-of-the-road interpretation which accepts that the brain is active and suggests that our dreams, or our memories of our dreams, are influenced by aspects of our conscious and subconscious minds. We have all experienced waking up after having a strange dream which seemed to be based partly on our own lives and partly on the last television programme we watched.

There are ways to use your dreams creatively, especially if you treat them as a window to your subconscious. Ask yourself what each dream meant, then question why you answered in the way that you did. See what you can learn from your answers. Here is a simple example: "I had a dream about an old girlfriend. This is someone whom I knew years ago. In the dream we were lovers. I woke up startled."

The first step is to comment about the significance: obviously, this description has an element of nostalgia. Why? Perhaps because the dreamer is subconsciously yearning for pleasurable past times. And the lesson? Maybe life is a little humdrum at the moment. He is too focused on routine and not actively looking for adventure. Maybe he needs to broaden his horizons.

There is nothing mystical about this. Our dreams have no message. We are using a product of our minds to think about what is below our conscious facade. There is nothing true or false about dreams, either.

The body temperature is high enough for us to throttle back on metabolic rate. This allows us to go to sleep.

People who have a naturally early circadian rhythm are "larks". They like to get up early and do their best work in the mornings. At the other extreme are the "night owls", who like to stay up late and feel at their best during the evening. Too much has been made of the distinction between these types, however. Most people have some preference about bedtime, but may not have a corresponding "best time of day".

Why do teenagers want to go to bed late and get up late, while many older people feel ready for bed in the mid-evening? This is mainly because circadian rhythms tend to be delayed (that is, late) when we are young and advanced (early) as we age. Some people also have an unusually late circadian rhythm, which means they never feel ready for sleep before 2am or

3am, and are never ready to get up before 10am or 11am.

It is a common misconception that sleep must get worse as we get older. However, it is true that sleep patterns vary more as we get older.

On a daily basis, we have some capacity to adjust for various degrees of sleep need. So if we are late one night because of a social engagement, we may still be able to keep a reasonably normal schedule the next day. But sooner or later the debt will need to be repaid.

Five days are about as long as a mild sleep debt can be incurred without either daytime sleepiness or catch-up sleep becoming necessary. The five-day pattern may well explain the origin of the week and the concept of the weekend.

Extract from *The Sleep Solution — Improve Your Sleep, Health and Quality of Life from Tonight*, by Nigel Buitt and Nick Hough, published by Vermillion at £9.99. Times readers can buy a copy by calling The Times Bookshop on 0900 134459.

THE TIMES ON MONDAY

How to choose the best time for bed

It will be one hell of a party. t be sur



Imperial Call takes the Gold Cup in 1996

It will be one hell of a party, to be sure

Johnny Acton gets his drinking boots on and prepares for the invasion of Gold Cup week at Cheltenham by the Irish

On Tuesday, the elegant lounge at the Golden Valley Hotel in Cheltenham will undergo a most unusual metamorphosis. For an hour or so before lunch, it will be transformed into a Roman Catholic chapel, abuzz with pilgrims from across the Irish Sea.

This is Gold Cup week, and, as ever, the Irish will descend on the Cotswolds in their thousands, to pay homage at the shrine of National Hunt racing. There can be little doubt as to what the majority of the congregation will be praying for — Irish victories and bloody good craic. With the opening of the festival happily coinciding with St Patrick's Day, the latter at least seems guaranteed.

Presiding over the occasion will be Father Sean Breen, celebrating his 30th Cheltenham, and sporting a shamrock, flown in specially by Aer Lingus, on his soutane. Father Breen wryly admits to the possibility of divine mandate behind his unofficial role as chaplain to the turf. He did, after all, wind up with a parish in which the racecourses (Punchestown and Naas) outnumber the pubs (the implausibly solitary Killeen Inn).

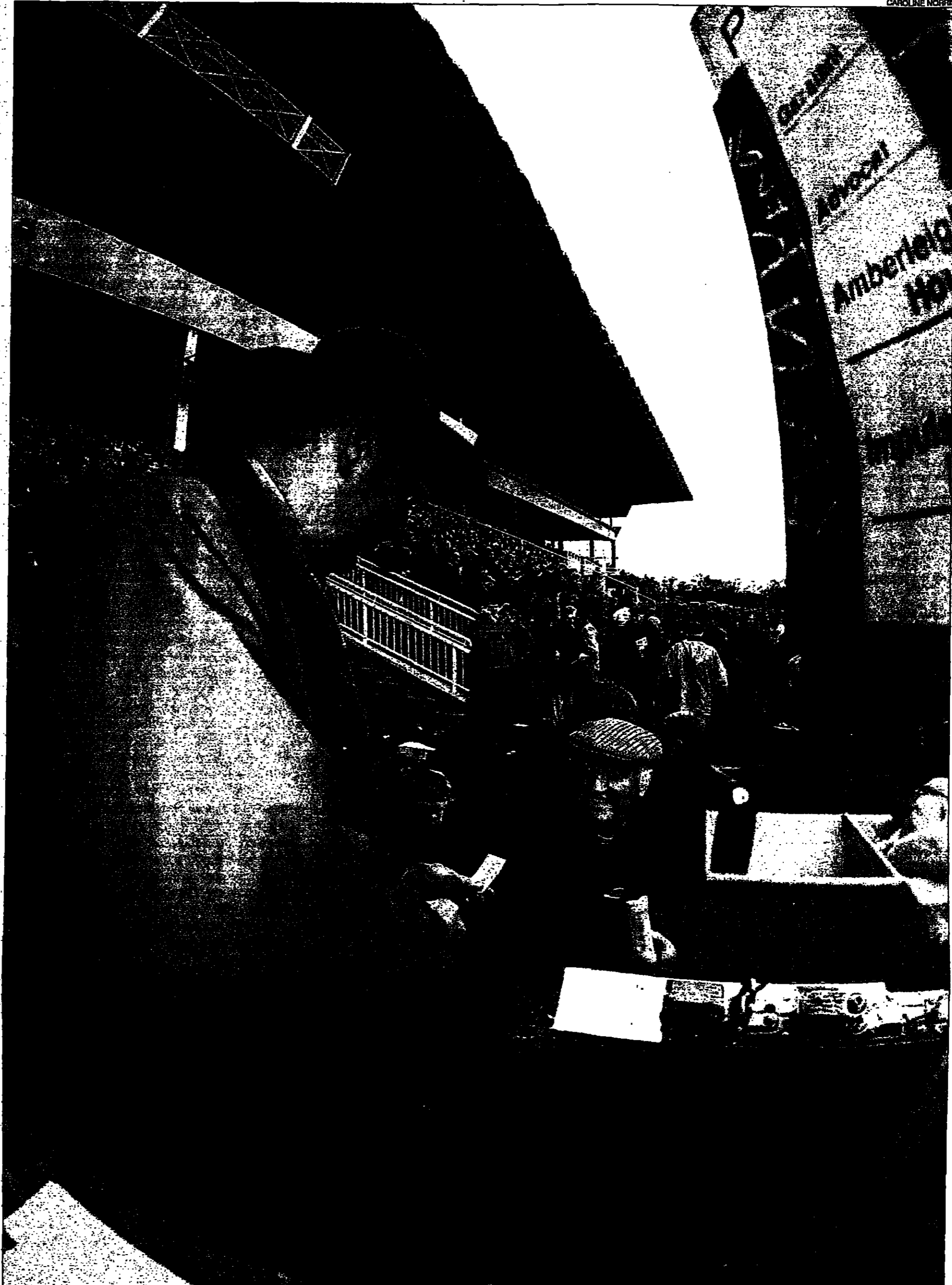
But while he has no qualms about praying for Irish successes on the track, and admits to a suspicion that "God is an Irishman", he does prefer to leave the faintly pagan business of blessing horses to others. Not that it did Danoli much harm before he romped away with the Sun Alliance Novices Hurdle in 1994.

mon". Perhaps a deeper and more ancient explanation for the annual migration lies in the simple, but mysterious bond between the Irish and their horses. Nowhere is this better epitomised than in the contemporary legends of Dubliners keeping horses on the top floor of their tower blocks, occasionally taking them down in the lifts for a spot of exercise, and *al fresco* grazing.

The Irish first began to attend Cheltenham en masse shortly after the Second World War, inspired by a run of four Irish victories in the Gold Cup between 1946 and 1950. The last three belonged to the Vincent O'Brien-trained Cottage Rake who, in 1949 became the first Irish horse sent over by aeroplane, narrowly escaping being put down in the process, when he went berserk over the Irish Sea.

During this period, with post-war rationing still in place in England, the invaders indelibly endeared themselves to the local population by bringing with them copious supplies of eggs, steaks and sausages which they were able to use as virtual currency. From the start, the arrival of the Irish was associated with an almighty hooley.

The people of Cheltenham and its environs still, for the most part, look forward to the arrival of the exuberant 7,000 or so people who make the journey over from the Republic. Joining them will be around six times that number of their compatriots based in England. The only problems from the local perspective is the demands the occasion makes on personal stamina, with the drinking and partying lasting round the clock and the odd theft of a trophy English stuffed fox from any establishment imprudent enough to leave one on display.



Father Sean Breen warms up for Gold Cup Week with a bet at Leopardstown races. There is something semi-religious in the Irish racing world's love affair with Cheltenham

Relations between the English and Irish at Cheltenham have always been characterised by friendly rivalry and mutual affection. Cotswoldians seem to relish the opportunity to be taken along by the tide of hedonism which engulfs them every March.

Almost as many tales are told of the Irish characters and their exploits in the hostilities of Cheltenham as in their equivalent back at home. Philip Jones, manager of the restaurant at the four-star

Queen's Hotel, scene of prodigious champagne breakfasts after the gallops, has a fund of anecdotes from 20 years on the job.

First up is Jimmy Ryan, who has arrived on the Monday for as long as anyone can remember, but who never books a room. He somehow survives the week by borrowing friends' rooms for the occasional shave, and catching the odd hour of kip in the lounge. Nobody seems to mind.

Then there are the racegoers who are guaranteed every year to turn up in all innocence at breakfast after a night on the tiles, only to find that they are in the wrong hotel. And at some point in the week, a band will arrive having booked a breakfast table incognito, and strike up an unstoppable flow of ceilidh music.

Another reason for the locals looking forward to the Gold Cup is the goldmine it represents to their economy. Rooms as far away as Stratford-upon-Avon are booked solid for months, if not years, in advance. Diane Burke, landlady of the Prince of Wales, banks on five times the normal quota of alcohol being consumed during the festival. Licensing hours in the town are extended to 12.30am but this restriction must be taken with a hefty pinch of salt. For the majority of the Irish making the journey, Cheltenham is the trip of the year and they budget accordingly.

Frank Connolly, a Dublin cabbie, is not unusual in earmarking £2,500 for the three days. One Irish owner was prepared to pay the Inland Revenue half a million pounds just to enable him to go to Cheltenham to see his

horse run. The bookies reckon on taking bets of at least a million pounds on each race at the festival, while the Allied Irish Bank sets up a stall just for the meeting. Cagney about figures for reasons of security, it admits only to doing "very substantial business", mostly exchanging punts for pounds and vice versa.

The gambling fever that overtakes the Irish during Gold Cup week cannot be contained by the bookies. The vast poker games of ten years ago may have roved surreptitiously from the bars to the bedrooms, after they caught the attention of the police, but there will still be those who have lost everything before their ferries reach England.

Tommy Ryan, a Dublin character in the insurance business, recalls the fervour generated in one rural Gloucestershire pub by an evening of mouse racing. "So, one of the mice fell asleep like, and wouldn't start. One fellow gave a bang to trap two, and the mouse got the necessary propulsion and won the race. So there was a stewards' inquiry and the race was declared null and void. This fellow was demanding £140. Did he get annoyed? So I started singing *The Wild Rover* to cool things down."

The frenetic spending which characterises Cheltenham week is matched by tales of heartwarming largesse. One punter who lost £4,000 at Pitch and Toss discovered that his victor had used it to book both men and their wives into their George V in Paris for the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe.

When For Auction won the Champion Hurdle, for the Heaslip brothers, at 40-1 in

1981, they arrived back at the Golden Valley Hotel and demanded that the manager "open a hundred bottles of champagne for a start. And get a piano". When told the hotel lacked the requisite instrument their answer was simple: "Then buy one."

On a more modest level, Les from Co Meath has no fonder memory of Cheltenham than a stay in The Dirty Duck. He and his friends each chipped in two pounds to back a horse called The Drunken Duck on behalf of the landlady, which duly obliged at 12-1.

At the Leopardstown meeting, nine days before Cheltenham, there is more talk of the forthcoming bonanza than of the day's racing everyone is ostensibly there to see. A certain look of reverential bliss appears in the eyes of old timers reminiscing about Cheltenham's past and contemplating the one around the corner.

"When I hit Cheltenham, when I hit the hill, I feel different from that moment for the whole week. Your whole being changes," opines a misty-eyed Raymond "Congo" Smith, celebrated and local veteran sports journalist, to the empathetic nods of those standing round.



Irish girls at Cheltenham. More than 7,000 Irish racegoers are expected this year

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SHOP WATCH

THE explosion in mail-order shopping means you can now order carpet by post. Natural Flooring Direct (0800 454721) has natural floorings, from oar to seagrass, and the sample pack comes with a tape measure. Roger Oates Design's mail-order catalogue (01531 631611) has traditional striped stair runners, with detailed advice on measuring.

It's Mother's Day next weekend. Jo Malone's Scent a Scent mail-order service (0171-720 0202) packs glorious bath products in a cream box with black ribbon. Godiva chocolate makers will send hand-made chocolates by mail order (0171-495 2845). Wild Things, a flower shop in Davies Street, W1, will post hand-tied bouquets for next-day delivery (0171-495 3030).

Fans of Mulberry's classic home range can go for total immersion at its new dedicated home shop. Its signature heavy paisley and print fabrics are there, as are leather beanbags and suede cushions. The shop is at 219 King's Road, SW3 (0171-352 1957).

IF YOU haven't heard of Press & Bastyan (01622 763211), you soon will. The new chain of



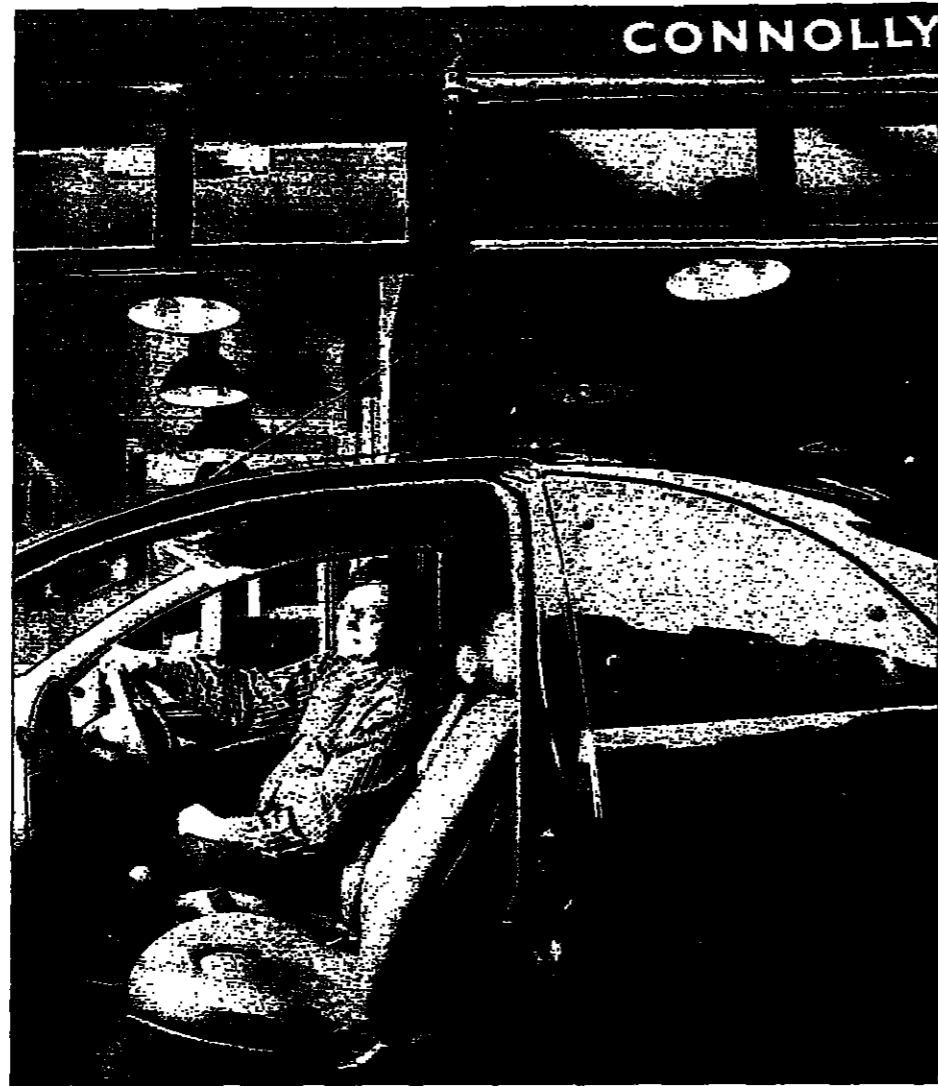
Press & Bastyan

fashion shops has already hit Glasgow and London's South Molton Street, and the Covent Garden shop opens later this month. Look out for strong work suits and rosebud chiffon evening-wear.

The latest edition of the official Great British Factory Shop Guide by Gill Cutress and Rolf Stricker covers more than 1,000 factory shops. It costs £14.99 from bookshops or call 0181-678 0593 for mail order.

UPDATE: Graham & Green's new stock includes dog collars with flashing lights (£17.95). Find them at 47 Elgin Crescent, W11 (0171-727 4594).

JUDITH WILSON



Sebastian Conran in his Ford Ka, which has been upholstered by Connolly

Going hell for leather

When Sebastian Conran decided to do his bit for the environment by swapping his Ferrari for a Fiat and his Porsche for a Ford Ka, it left him with a style problem. How could he still cut a dash? He found the perfect answer at Connolly, suppliers of leather upholstery for the world's finest cars. The 41-year-old designer, son of Sir Terence, runs an appreciative hand over the blue Connolly hide of his humble little Ka and almost purrs with pleasure over the distinctive look and feel of the leather.

The transformation of his Fiat Cinquecento was even more striking. "One of the cheapest cars in the world, with the most expensive interior," he sighs. "The combination works brilliantly. Everyone who has seen it has said how delicious it is. But it's the most environment-friendly car in the world, so my conscience is saved."

Having originally set up as shoemakers and saddlers in 1878, the Connolly brothers, Samuel and Joseph, went on to make their name in the carriage trade after being commissioned to supply the leather seats for Edward VII's Coronation Coach in 1901. Three years later, when Charles Rolls and Henry Royce built their first car, Connolly

When Sebastian Conran downsized his car, he upgraded the seats at Connolly. Michael Cable writes

my favourite shop

was chosen to provide the upholstery and since then it has covered the seats of every Rolls-Royce and Bentley ever made, as well as those of every Aston Martin, Ferrari, Morgan and Jaguar. The Houses of Parliament and 14 other parliaments around the world sit on Connolly leather. The leather is produced in its tannery in Canterbury and its mill in Wimbledon and has also been used on Concorde, the QE2 and on the seats in the new British Library.

Still very much a family firm, now run by third and fourth-generation descendants of the founders, the company decided only recently to diversify into the luxury leather

goods market, opening a discreet shop behind the Lanesborough hotel, London, three years ago. Sebastian Conran was one of the first customers through the doors of the converted Belgravia stables, curious to check out the designer collection of travel-themed accessories that includes everything from suitcases to in-car cappuccino sets, and a weekend case with a walnut frame and an eyebrow-raising price tag of £2,500.

"I settled for a knitted tie which, at £40, felt affordable. As I went to pay, I was asked whether there would be anything else. Would I like them to trim my car? The assistant didn't bat an eyelid when I told him I only had a Fiat Cinquecento. When I was quoted £1,200 I thought, why not? That was less than I used to pay to have my Ferrari serviced. Even then, I had no idea just how beautiful it was going to be."

So delighted was he with the result that when he later got the Ka he decided to have that "Connollyised" as well, even though

the price by then had risen to £3,000. "It was still worth every penny," he insists. "It transformed the car."

A lifelong performance car enthusiast — the owner, at various times, of a Ferrari 275 GTB as well as a Bentley and the Porsche — he is now a convert to the idea that small is beautiful. "If the car is going to survive in congested cities it will have to be reinvented," he says. "Micro cars are the future."

As a designer, he always knew that his father's hugely successful act was going to be a hard one to follow. "By the time he was the age I am now he had 40 shops. But you can't make comparisons. He's a genius. I just do my own thing."

He trained at the Central School of Art and Design — where he went through a well-publicised punk phase helping to promote the Clash — and went on to build up his own successful industrial design company with a huge client list that has included Mothercare, Marks &

Spencer, Boots, WH Smith and Rolls-Royce Aerospace as well as his father's Conran empire.

He is married to the fashion designer Georgina Godley and they have two young sons. He is currently working with one of the major car companies on a number of ideas for improving interior car design, an area that he feels has been badly neglected.

"Car firms economise on the interior, which doesn't make sense," he says. "Lack of storage space is a problem. And why are there always ashtrays when most people don't smoke these days? What we really need are rubbish bins."

The leather car-tidy he has designed for Connolly seems far too beautiful to be used for rubbish. Like his other designs in the range — including a £1,600 leather toolkit and a £500 jump-leads case — it is the sort of luxury for the motorist who has everything.

Connolly, 32 Grosvenor Crescent, London SW1X 7EX (0171-235 3883). Open 10am-6pm, Mon to Sat.



Sebastian Conran (right) shows Jonathan Connolly a leather coat he designed for the shop's travel accessory range

GADGETS



Popcorn maker: great taste

NOTHING beats a bowl of fresh popcorn. Tim Wapshott writes. But unless you have the right size of bowl to fit underneath the Hinari Movie Time Popcorn Maker it fires popped corn all over the kitchen. It's a palaver to use but the results tasted great.

Hinari Movie Time Popcorn Maker, £14.75 plus p&p, from Lakeland Ltd (015394 88100)

Remember your roots

One sure way of embracing spring is by planting a blooming flower-pot. Colour and fragrance can lift a flagging spirit as can nurturing a plant to its best-dazzling potential. A pot can also be replanted each season to create an ever-changing window to the world. Garden designer Ross Palmer says it is important to decide whether your pot will be in a sunny or a shady spot and to choose plants accordingly. His favourites are lilies, jasmine, tobacco plants and geraniums, which all grow well in the sun, and hostas, hart's-tongue ferns, primroses and polyanthus for the shade.

PLANT POTS

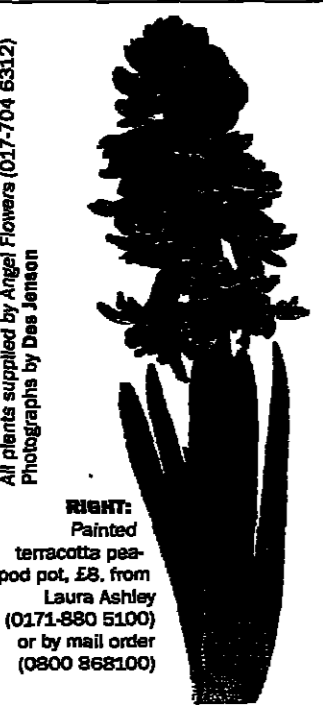
"Planting a pot is simple," he says. "Put an inch of coarse gravel at the bottom to stop roots growing through the hole and blocking drainage. Then transfer the new plant with some compost into the pot. Be careful not to break up or disturb the roots or the plant may go into shock." He suggests using fertilisers sparingly at the beginning of each season and watering pots at least once a day during the summer. Garden Books (0171-792 0777) has friendly staff and

stocks numerous books on container gardening.

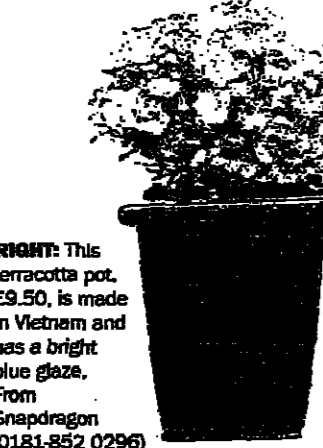
If the thought of rearing ferns and flowers leaves you cold then try getting creative with the pots.

Anthony Noel, author of *Terracotta*, a book devoted to garden pots and urns (Frances Lincoln, available from April 9), suggests painting flower-pots to lighten up a dreary corner. "Even unplanted, a painted pot can make a striking focal point in a garden," he says. "Use emulsion or stone paint and create your own design."

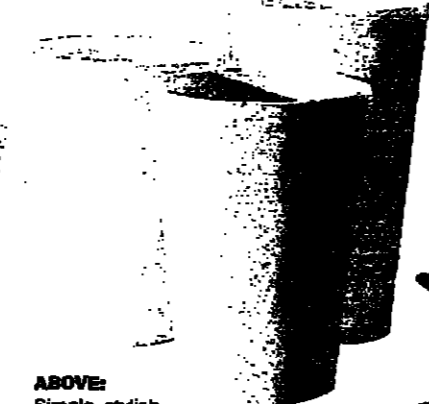
MARY ANN PERCY



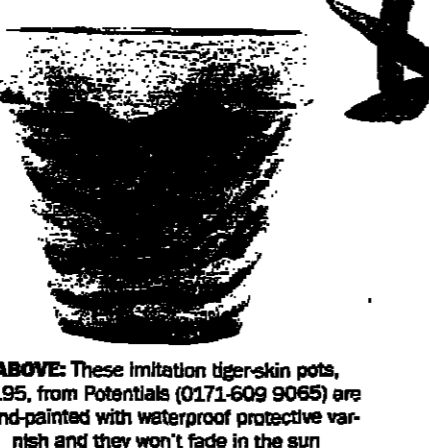
RIGHT: Painted terracotta pot, £8, from Laura Ashley (0171-880 5100) or by mail order (0800 868100)



RIGHT: This terracotta pot, £9.50, is made in Vietnam and has a bright blue glaze. From Snapdragon (0181-852 0296)



ABOVE: Simple, stylish, white marble plant pots cost £11 each from David Wainwright (0171-431 5900)



ABOVE: These imitation tiger-skin pots, £9.95, from Potentials (0171-609 9065) are hand-painted with waterproof protective varnish and they won't fade in the sun

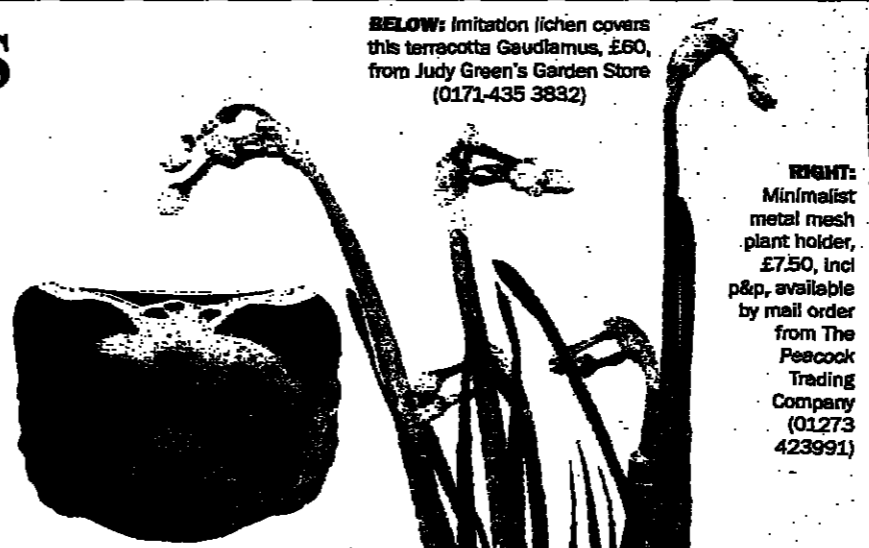


ABOVE: Cute galvanised flowerpot set with tray, £14.95 (plus £3.50 p&p) by mail order from Grand Illusions (0181-744 1046)



ABOVE: Natural pumice pot, £15, small enough to fit on the windowsill, from Jane Packer (0171-935 2673)

LEFT: Nicole Farhi, purveyor of style, snapped up these stone planters, £54, to use in her shops. From Space (0171-229 6533)



ABOVE: Terra-cotta cat pot, £10.25, comes with a clip for wall mounting. From Patis (0171-622 8262)



BELOW: Sandy aluminium flower pot set (ref DVA 036) by mail order, £47 per set plus £2.95 p&p, from Ocean (0171-498 8844)



RIGHT: Minimalist metal mesh plant holder, £7.50, incl p&p, available by mail order from The Peacock Trading Company (01273 423991)

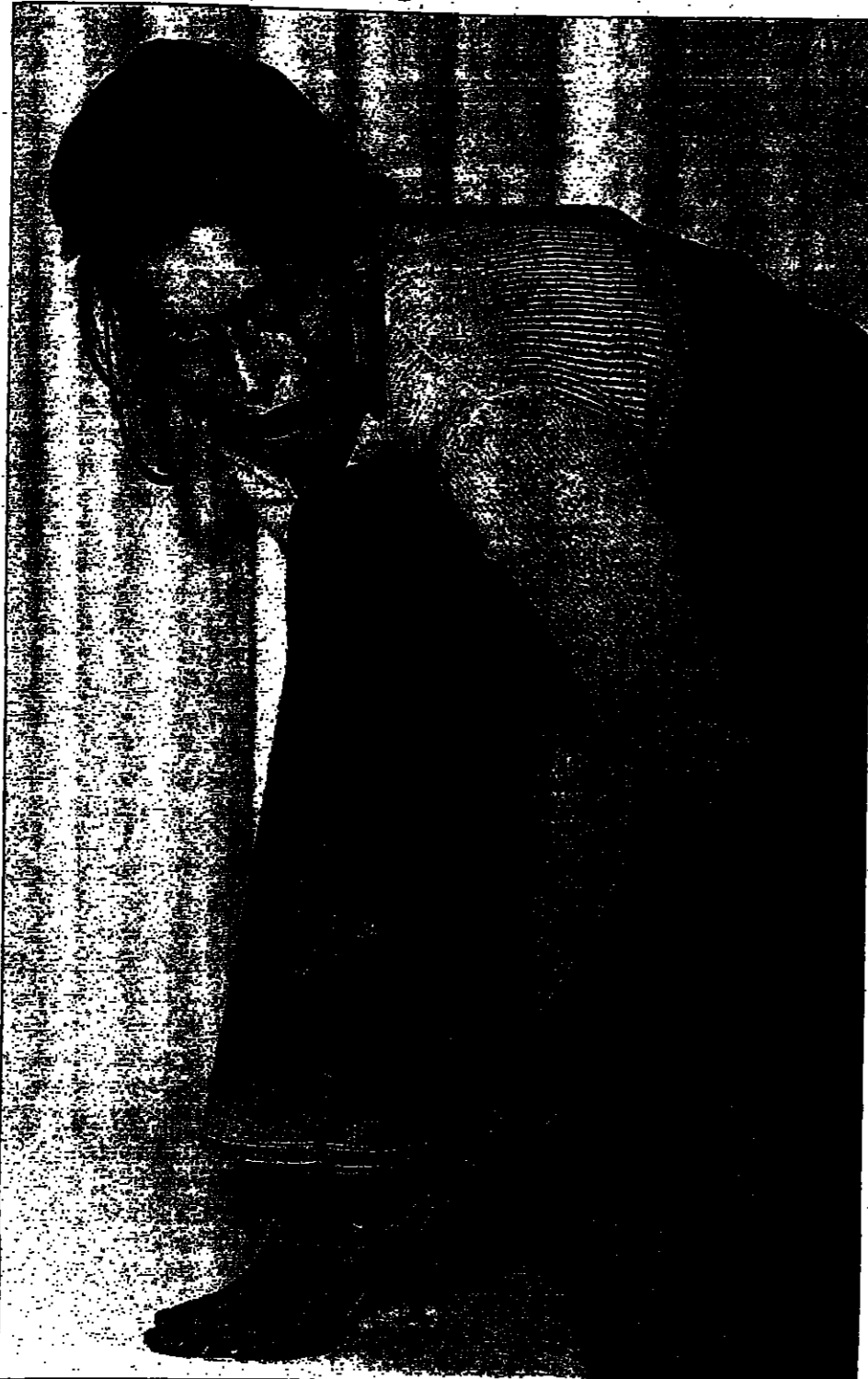


ABOVE: Classic checked terracotta pot, £24.95, from The Chelsea Gardener (0171-352 5656)



ABOVE: Surprisingly cheap but stylish lime green wooden trough, £8, from Laura Ashley (0171-680 5100)

The Nineties hippy designs to dye for



The Sixties are worth returning to. It was an age of optimism, when man walked on the moon, Concorde shrank the globe, miniskirts paraded the high streets — and tie-dye was born in Britain.

Although tie-dye had long been used in India and Indonesia, in Sixties Britain it was seen as an innovative way to make clothing wild and free — to bring a bit of the maharishi and the Beatles' trip to India back to Blighty. The effect — produced by gathering portions of fabric and tying them tightly before immersing the garment in bright dyes — was

soon used on flared jeans, miniskirts, kaftans and Indian-print shirts.

It seems strange, then, that in the late Nineties, a period of minimalism and pared down simplicity, when we are looking to nature and religion for inspiration, that the technique should return.

"This time it is much more simple," says Clarissa Hulse, the scarf designer who dip-dyes, hand-paints, tie-dyes and screen-prints her fashionable wraps. "There is much more dip-dyeing around — where you dip the entire garment into one colour, then dip parts of it into another. Wherever you look on the high street, designers are giving garments more interest by varying dyeing techniques."

Designers have also changed the way they are using tie-dye. Instead of gathering large bits of fabric, hippy-style, they are using fine pieces of thread and beads to create delicate dots, fine lines and tiny starry patterns.

Lucille Lewin, owner of the fashion group Whistles, believes the upsurge in paint-effect fabrics is because women want clothing to be more interesting, and more feminine. "Women want to be beautiful. They are returning to little dresses and delicate embellished items." Her stores have sold hundreds of antique slips which are dip- and tie-dyed, then embroidered.

It is not just scarves and accessories that are getting the treatment. Egg, in London, has dresses by Asha Sarabhai in cobalt blue and grey silk; Oasis a range of dip-dyed cardigans in blues; Joseph blue suede trousers and matching tops with a white tie-dye strip; Whistles sarongs, tucked dresses, cap-sleeved shirts and embroidered sea-green and lavender trousers.

Although most designers use natural fabrics, because dye takes to it well, some, such as E Play, have used the techniques on elastic and transparent fabrics.

Old techniques, like old hippies, it seems, never die. They just grow up.

LISA GRAINGER



THREE OF A KIND

Dip-dye and tie-dye scarves in light spring colours are ideal accessories to liven up March days. LG



Mauve and green chiffon silk scarf, £75. Wonderful Wraps, House of Fraser, stores nationwide (0171-827 0045)



Blue and white tie-dye cotton-scarf/sarong, £125. Liberty, W1 (0171-734 1234)



Blue and green flower-pattern chiffon silk scarf, £95. Puzuk, Harrods, SW1 (0181-878 8504)

ABOVE: Yellow and red dye-print mesh top, £145, Laurel, 105-106 New Bond Street, W1, or Harvey Nichols, SW1 (0171-580 6066). Suede jeans, £257, Paul Costelloe (0171-589 9484). Yellow and red dye chiffon scarf, £14.99, Accessorize, branches nationwide (0171-313 3000)

ABOVE LEFT: Blue rib dip-dye cotton-knit sweater, £49.95, Monsoon, branches nationwide (0171-313 3000). Indigo embroidered-hem dip-dye jeans, £24.99, Diesel, Neal Street, WC2 (0171-497 5543). Blue two-tone sandals, £125, Russell & Bromley, 24-25 New Bond Street, W1, and selected branches nationwide (0171-629 6803)

LEFT: Blue suede and white dye line drawstring top, £220, Joseph, 26 Sloane Street, SW1 (0171-590 6200). White stretch trousers, £37, Siseley, selected Benetton branches nationwide (0161-929 9259)

BELOW LEFT: Stone and burgundy dip-dye linen jacket, £387, matching drawstring trousers, £205, Betty Jackson, 311 Brompton Road, SW3 (0171-589 7884). Burgundy silk scarf, £93, Etro, 14 Old Bond Street, W1 (0171-495 5767)

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Brussels, February 1998.

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Photographs: Nick Farrell for Artist Group Management, LA, California, Hair/make-up: Moriko Kawas, Styling: Azzam Dip Uppal, Model: Rie

The Times Cook

Forget the hotdogs and bagels — New York's mix of cultures is seasoned with cooking of the highest standard

I am writing from the Upper East Side in Manhattan, where I have been invited as guest cook at The Mark to introduce an authentic afternoon tea. The brigade, under executive chef David Paulstich and chef patissier Laurent Carrière, are kind, helpful and efficient. This allows me time, once tea is over and once I have made sure there are ginger cakes and fruit cakes enough for the next day, to explore my favourite city. And the delightful thing is that when I come back exhausted and footsore, I can dine on the exquisite food that the city's restaurants now offer.

woman sorted through bundles of leaves, stripping out the central vein, and smoothing out the leaves to be used as wrappers. We had intended a five-minute detour. An hour later we left after buying a selection of extremely good cigars made from Dominican Republic-grown tobacco of Cuban seed. Martha had given us a couple of samples to smoke with tiny cups of strong sweet coffee. She has a customer who brings in a bottle of cognac to accompany his cigars. Cigars can be ordered by fax, prices are good, as is the quality.

There is so much happening on the New York restaurant scene that there is a risk of missing out on well-established tables. An American Place has long been a favourite restaurant of many. Well-cooked authentic American food, devised by chef-patron Larry Forgione, this is a most satisfying place to spend a first night in Manhattan. The Four Seasons is a real grown-up treat. Miles van der Rhee's classically spare, square space is the perfect backdrop to the nightly drama of a glamorous dinner crowd, beautifully cooked food from Christian Albin's kitchen, and a sumptuous wine list, all orchestrated by Alex von Bidder. My final 24 hours in New York, after eight days in the kitchen, began with a walk through the Greenmarket in Union Square. The stalls were few on this late winter morning: flowering spring

bulbs, baked goods, potatoes and apples were the main offerings. As we walked uptown, between 25th and 26th Street on 6th Avenue, we spotted PB Cuban cigars (001 212 367 8949, fax 001 212 727 8001). A small plain store-front in the middle of the flower district, there were two tables in the window, a counter presided over by Martha, and behind her two benches at which her husband, Enrique Peña, and three others swiftly and deftly rolled cigars, while to one side a



Frances Bissell

Parsnip and potato soup with walnut and herb crumble Serves 6 18bsp olive oil 1 large onion, peeled and diced 3 or 4 large garlic cloves 4-8 medium parsnips, peeled and diced 1 large potato, peeled and diced 1.5l chicken or vegetable stock 1 bay leaf Salt Pepper Nutmeg Several sprigs of sage and rosemary 150g freshly shelled walnuts

Heat the oil in a heavy saucepan and in it lightly fry the onion and garlic until the onion is translucent and golden brown. Stir in the diced parsnips and potato, and fry gently until they take on a little colour. Then add the stock, bay leaf, a little salt, pepper, and nutmeg, together with a couple of sage leaves and a small piece of rosemary (three or four spikes is enough). Bring to the boil, and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 15-20 minutes. Remove the herbs and allow to cool before blending and sieving. (The soup may be smooth enough not require sieving).

Finely chop the herbs and walnuts, using a little coarse sea salt to "grip" the ingredients on the chopping board. Bring the soup to the boil, add more seasoning if necessary, and then serve in heated soup bowls with the walnut mixture scattered over it. An alternative presentation is with a walnut and herb cream swirled into the soup. To make this, put these ingredients in the food processor or blender and add 200ml soya "cream" or whipping cream and blend until smooth. Using vegetable stock and soya "cream" makes this soup suitable for vegetarians and vegans.

Mustard roasted rabbit Serves 4 4 rabbit legs, hindquarters only 2tbsp grain mustard Sea salt Freshly ground black pepper Ground ginger Extra virgin olive oil 12-18 pickling onions, peeled 200g button mushrooms, brushed 1 sprig each of rosemary and tarragon 1 bay leaf Thinly pared zest of an orange Splash of dry white wine

Sprinkle the mustard over the rabbit. Season it with salt, pepper and ginger, and place in an oiled ovenproof dish. Heat a tablespoon or two of olive oil in a small pan and in it gently brown the onions. Then add the mushrooms and cook for a minute or two more. Spoon them into the dish with the rabbit, and place the herbs and orange zest on top. Add a little white wine (about 100ml) to encourage some gravy. Place in a preheated oven at 200C, gas mark 5, cover with foil, and cook for 30 minutes.

Lower the heat a couple of notches, and continue cooking for 30 minutes or more, until the rabbit is tender. Serve with a rocket, spinach and watercress salad. Polenta, hot cornbread or mashed potatoes accompany the rabbit perfectly. Flavour the mash with chives or olive paste. Or, for a more unusual accompaniment, bake some sweet potatoes in the oven, choosing the orange-fleshed variety for its sweet, intense, nutty flavour.

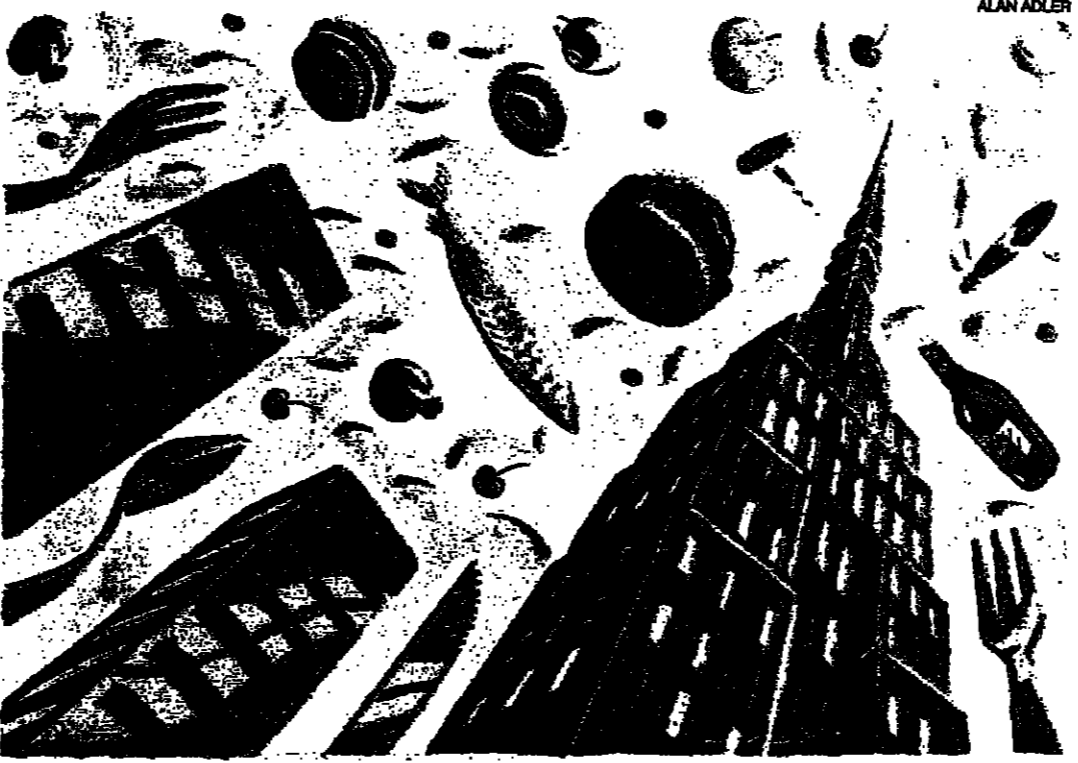
Compote of dried berries with spiced Zinfandel syrup Serves 4 150g each dried blueberries, cranberries and cherries (if not available, use stoned prunes, apricots, figs and muscatel raisins) 1 stick of cinnamon 6 crushed cardamom pods 4 cloves 1 bottle red Zinfandel Sugar (see recipe)

THE PERFECT BURGER

Just say open sesame

A REAL hamburger, made with good quality, lean, flavoursome beef, is a treat. It may not qualify as a "serious" meal — with a beginning, middle and end — but, set against the realities of modern life, it makes a perfect snack.

METHOD: Mince or finely chop the beef. Mix with the shallots, herbs and pepper, and shape into a firm, neat patty-shape, roughly the size of the bun. Have the grill hot, or use a well-seasoned cast-iron or non-stick frying pan. Cook the hamburger on both sides until done to your liking. Salt lightly and serve hot on the bread of your choice, lightly toasted if you wish.



ALAN ADLER

CONSUMING INTERESTS: MARMALADE

The French Gault Millau magazine recently tasted marmalades and placed Wilkin and Sons of Tiptree bottom of the class. This only proves that the French understand nothing about marmalade. Wilkin's range of 13 marmalades, made with up to 53g of fruit per 100g, sets standards. In my



Chivers Old English Thick Cut Pure Fruit Marmalade, 89p for 454g. Claims: Prepared with 30g of fruit per 100g. "Pure fruit. No artificial colours, preservatives or flavourings." Verdict: Finished third with Gault Millau, but comes nowhere with me. Peel too thick, and poorly distributed, with none at all in the top inch of my jar. ★

Harvey Nichols Seville Orange Thin Cut Marmalade, £1.70 for 340g. Claims: "No artificial colouring or flavouring." Prepared with 45g of fruit per 100g. Total sugar 62g per 100g. Verdict: A superior product with more orange flavour and less cloying sweetness than any other in the tasting. Real citric tang. ★★★

St Michael Fresh Fruit Medium Cut Orange Marmalade, £1.09 for 454g. Claims: Prepared with 27g of fruit per 100g. Unusual in listing water as an ingredient. Verdict: Moist appearance but not as runny as it looked. Peel over-resistant to the bite. Flavour strong. ★★

Roman conqueror of the kitchen

Regular trips to Italy inspired Carol Vorderman as a cook, says Joe Warwick

If Carol Vorderman really is a fantasy figure for men with minds (the thinking man's crumpet, in pidgin terminology) they should know that their vision of perfection is, in addition to her IQ of 169, her beauty and her sense of humour, an extremely accomplished cook.



Carol Vorderman a television presenter today (left), and at age seven with mother Jean in north Wales



HOME COOKING

She became famous for fetching consonants and vowels, doing difficult sums at breakneck pace and patiently humouring Richard Whiteley's poor puns and weak jokes on Channel 4's Countdown. She has since presented countless other programmes and most recently has been hosting the midweek National Lottery Draw on BBC1.

When Carol was ten I remarried, Jean says. "My husband was Italian, which meant we went to Italy almost every year. Of course, they are tremendous at cooking, they really are, and so she picked up a lot in the kitchen with recipes and things."

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Plants that are made in the shade



Ferns grow well on the flat. Some like it cool and damp.

Stephen Anderton on life under the trees

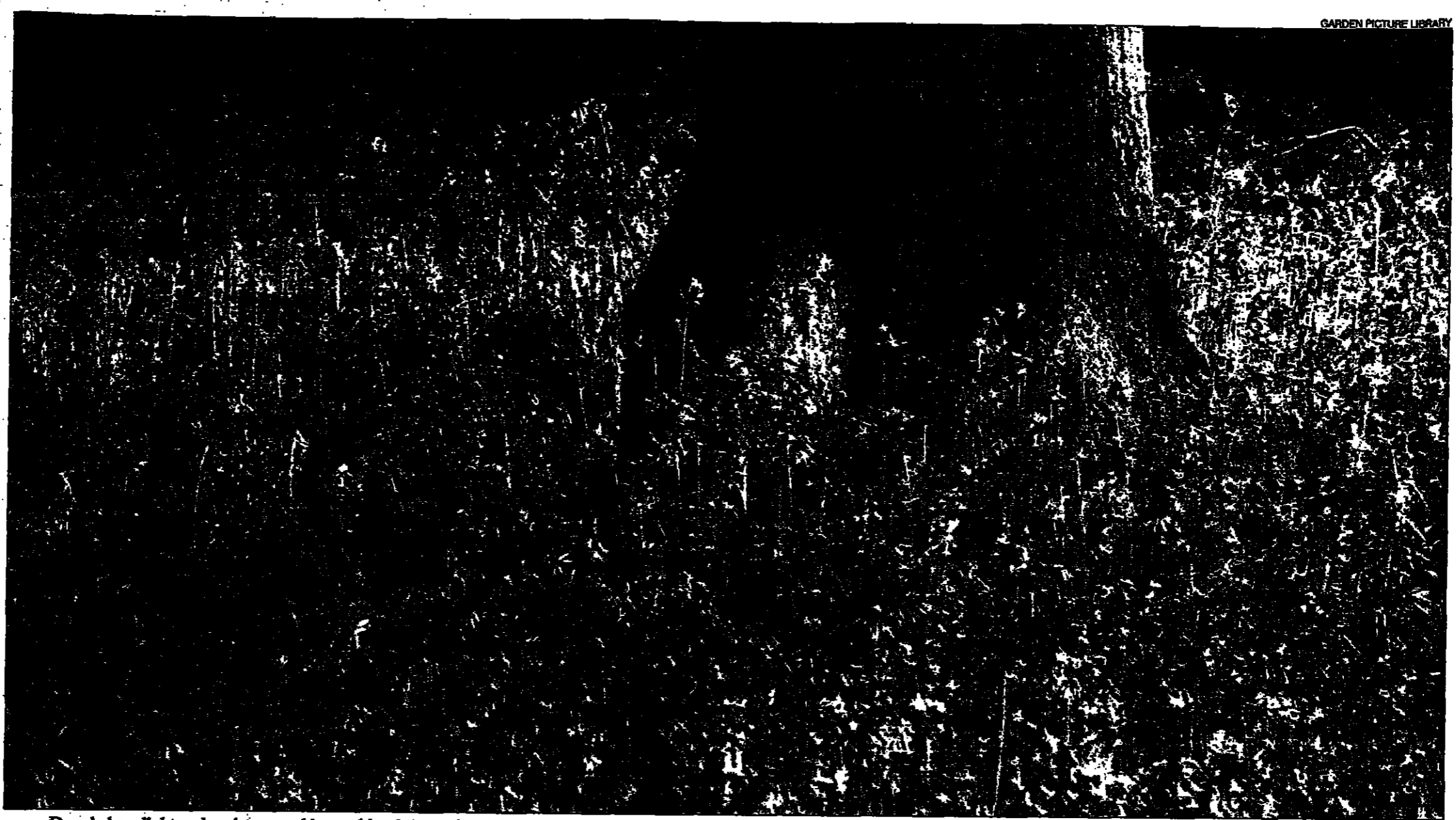
Do you ever stop to wonder just what it means when a plant "requires shade"? What sort of shade? There are so many kinds. The reduced level of light is only a part of it. Like the roof over our heads, there is a great deal more than reduced sunlight contributing to the quality of life below.

Some plants like their shade in daily doses, keeping them out of the midday sun, but otherwise enjoying full daylight. Think of yellow-leafed shrubs such as the golden cut-leaved elder *Sambucus racemosa* 'Plumosa Aurea' and golden *Philadelphus coronarius* 'Aureus'. Both have lemony foliage that fries to a crisp in hot midday sun.

Think of a large-leaved rhododendron planted too near the reflected heat of a wall, where the midday heat in June wilts the soft, half-formed shoots.

Some plants like their shade in longer, seasonally controlled doses. These include woodland bulbs, which make all their leaf and store all their future energy during the early months of the year, while the trees above are leafless. As the woodland canopy darkens, they sit tight and cool on the woodland floor, often shedding their leaves and becoming dormant.

But daily or seasonal shade is still only half the story. Soil depth, soil moisture and root competition are also factors. Hardest of all to garden in is dry, rooty shade under big trees. You could feed and cultivate the top 9in of soil, hack out all the hungry fibrous roots and plant colourful woodlanders such as the purple *Euphorbia amygdaloides* 'Purpurea' and dog's-tooth



Dappled sunlight and moist ground in combination provide rich nutrition. In these conditions the harvest can be bountiful, such as with this carpet of woodland bluebells beneath a tree trunk

violets. But the roots will all be back again in a few years, ready to give your ingenious a depressing, lingering death. Limes, sycamores and horse chestnuts are among the most villainous.

It is better not to fight it, but to plant with it. Use plants that will survive there, flowering early then resting the season away. Snowdrops, acornites and celandines are the A-team for the purpose. Given a layer of leaf litter on top, you could grow wood anemones too, and Solomon's seal, even bluebells.

If the soil is thoroughly root-riddled and virtually nothing else survives, you can spray out the few bits of grass that find their way in, and allow a carpet of moss to develop. (Weedkillers glyphosate and paraquat leave mosses almost untouched.) In contrast to this difficult shade is the kind of shade all woodland gardeners long for, with rich, deep soil, and trees which put their roots deep down out of your way. It is a kind of perpetual woodland edge, where shade is

always high and dappled, and there is enough light for shrubs and colourful herbaceous plants to flower.

Here you can do wonders. There can be carpets of erythroniums. Not just the dog's tooth violet *Erythronium dens-canis*, but also the graceful American species such as *revolutum* and *tuolumnense*. There can be trilliums, also from America, and primulas of many kinds.

Primroses will survive in drier conditions, given sufficient summer coolness, but in good woodland soil they really shine. Delicate dicentra can provide relief to the campaign of massed rhododendrons. Muscular *rodgersias* stand firm and clatter as rain falls on their corrugated canopy of foliage.

Ferns can grow luxuriously, on banks and on the flat. Where rain is plentiful, in Cornwall, Wales and Cumbria, polypody ferns will even find their way aloft, settling in the forks of trees and on the top-sides of mossy branches.

Honeysuckles can wind their way around tree trunks, and climbing *Hydrangea petiolaris* can be sent to shimmy up into the branches of an old oak or a Scots pine. And all of this is due to cool,



Dog's tooth violets need protection from wandering roots

shady roots and a generous root run. To give them warm shade is simply not the same. Thoroughly wet shade is not the gift to gardeners it might seem. It is not the province of interesting and delicate woodland plants, but is colonised by those which like it rough and wet.

Running bamboos, which in drier ground behave with some decorum, here take to jungle warfare, racing along underground and suddenly shooting up behind you. The ostrich fern, *Matteucia struthiopteris*, employs the same tactics while sweetly unscrolling its fronds. Big

funnel-leaves abound in petasites (butterbur and cousins), the umbrella plant *petiophyllum*, and the all-smothering elephant hides of gunnera.

If wet sun is the weediest place in a garden, at least in wet shade you can encourage a monster like gunnera to take over the show, and expect lesser bullies and grasses to keep a lower profile.

But turn your back and there is always some new weed testing the water, looking for its moment of opportunity. In wet conditions, even shady ones, everything happens so much faster.



Firnest of ferns: thriving mattuceia with erythronium



Anemone ranunculoides



Anemone blanda

Sue Corbett on a revolutionary coup de grâce that could change the way we cut the grass

Humans may soon be able to put their feet up when the grass gets too high — and watch in comfort while a robot mows the lawn. The RoboMow lawn mower, to be launched at the Ideal Home Exhibition, which starts on Thursday at Earls Court, London, has a "brain" which, with the aid of wire pegged around the edge of the lawn and connected to a small generator, tells the machine where to mow. All the gardener has to do is press the button and relax.

An Israeli firm, Friendly Machines, is behind the electronic wizardry that has produced the RoboMow, a machine that is as happy to mow your lawn for you as you are to sit watching *Gardeners World* while it does so.

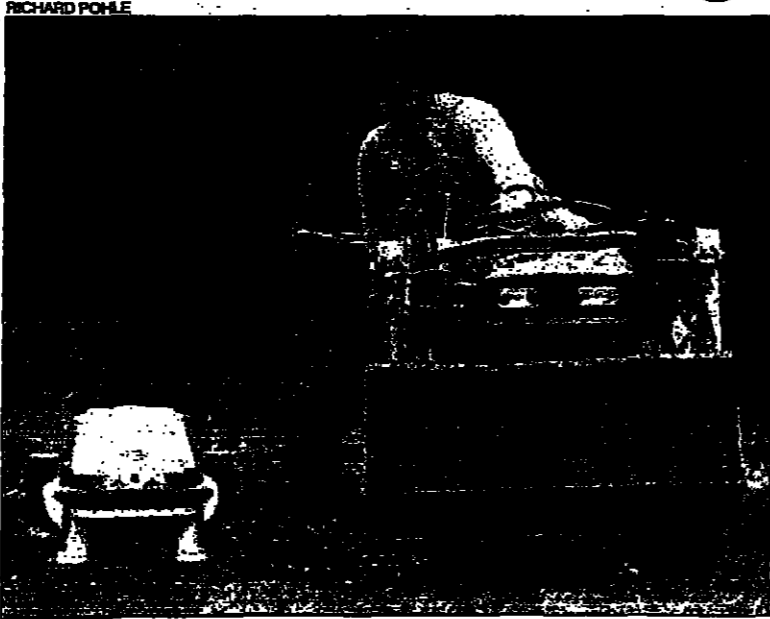
Friendly Machines wants to go beyond even this bold venture into the great gardening frontier. The manufacturer hopes that the RoboMow will eventually be able to mow your lawn while you are out of the country with the aid of a prototype "docking station" that will enable it to be programmed to come out and do its work at set times each week.

Retailing at £999 including VAT, the RoboMow comes with enough wire to cover 500 sq metres of lawn and a small generator whose AA-size batteries provide enough power to cut that area once before they need recharging.

The RoboMow cuts to the left, starting in the bottom right-hand corner of the garden. At the end of its first sweep, it stops, executes a stylish about-turn on its axis and returns in a parallel line. The proximity sensors on the front and back of the machine emit a sort of short-distance radar, which is interrupted by anything or anybody in its path that is 12in tall or higher, causing the machine to stop. Anything lower, such as a pond, flowerbed or clump of crocuses in the lawn, constitutes a "soft island" and has to be separately wired, with each generator able to accommodate three soft islands.

On meeting a solid object such as a bench, the RoboMow mows up to it, performs as many back-and-forth journeys as are necessary to cover its width and then remembers to go back and cut its far side before going on to mow the rest of the lawn. On meeting a child, a pet or perhaps

One giant leap for lawnmowing



The RoboMow (left) is happy to cut the lawn without any human help

WHERE TO BUY A ROBOMOW

RoboMow dealers include Carters of Southampton (01489 575242); Winchester Garden Machinery (01730 895035); and Burgess & Randall of Paulton (01798 872506). For details of other dealers, contact Friendly Machines, 65 Park Street, Thame, Oxfordshire OX9 3HT (01844 261653).

The Ideal Home Exhibition is at Earls Court, London, March 19-April 13 (0171-385 1200). The Husqvarna solar-powered mower is a work-alone machine which covers the wired lawn area randomly. Priced at £1,645 including VAT, it will also be shown at Earls Court. For details call 01453 822382.

even a bemused gardener of the old school, it waits for five seconds and, if the person or animal moves out of the way, it continues on its course. If the person or animal stays put, the treatment is the same as for a solid object.

"The RoboMow will operate comfortably on a 15-degree slope," says Tim Mitchell, managing director of the firm's UK subsidiary. "Anything above that, and an in-built tilt sensor makes sure that the blade cuts out so that the machine won't topple over — vital if the

machine is to operate out of the docking station on its own."

The machine will cut to the edge of your lawn, but not (as yet) do you edging for you. "That facility could well come soon," Mr Mitchell says. "There could be all sorts of upgrades, adaptations and attachments. This is the machine of the future. One day, it could even fertilise and water your lawn for you."

Mr Mitchell admits that there have been a few hiccups in trials — mowing stripes, for example, have been inconsistent — and that the RoboMow is not yet the finished article. "But it does all the jobs it has to do sufficiently well for us to get the data to produce the final software," he says. "Mechanically, it is perfect, and we're only hours away from the software being ready, too."

"As soon as all our dealers are 100 per cent happy with all our results, we'll ship them — hopefully by next month — and they'll be able to start demonstrating and selling," he says. "We have allocated 1,500 machines for the UK, and we're targeting every garden over 300 sq metres — that's a couple of tennis courts in size."

Security is the biggest worry when machine and generator are on automatic pilot in the gardener's absence, but an anti-theft device is an optional extra. Dealers will indelibly encode each machine sold with the customer's house number, street and postcode, details that will show up every time a machine is serviced.

If the RoboMow is stolen without the generator, it is inoperable, and one or two would-be purchasers have already decided on ingenious hiding places for their generator around the garden.

Being powered by electricity, it may not be as environmentally friendly as its nearest rival, the Husqvarna solar-powered mower. But its mulching facility, cutting the grass so small that they can be sprayed back on to the turf in a green mist, is the sort of instant recycling that will appeal to anyone who finds it a trial to have to cart grass cuttings off to the compost heap.

"Of course, some people will always love compost heaps the way some people will always love pushing a lawnmower around," says Mr Mitchell. "We're just giving folk an option."

Belgium. It's slightly different.



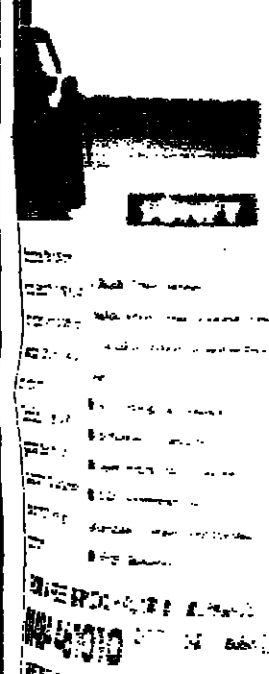
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Europe, February 1998



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Don't



STEPHEN ANDERTON'S GARDEN ANSWERS

My Clematis 'Nelly Moser' has become a tangle of dead and living stems. Can I cut it back severely without killing it? It has flowered beautifully over the years with the minimum of pruning. — Mrs J. Raven, Derby.



Cut it back hard now, to about 2-3 ft. and it should be flowering again by the end of the season. Next winter, be a little firmer with your pruning, so it does not get in a tangle again quite so quickly. You will still get two seasons of flower.

This morning I discovered root mealybug in a container. It had demolished the plant. How can I get rid of it and prevent it spreading? — Miss B. Rosewood, London.

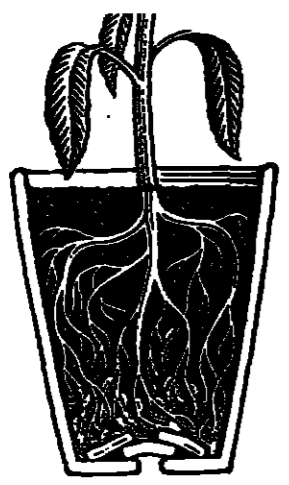
Root mealybug is mostly a problem in dry pot plants. Plants usually survive it. The treatment is malathion applied as a root drench, but badly affected plants are better

replanting permanently. Regrowth can be dug again and the remainder treated chemically by putting glyphosate into the hollow core of the cut stems at 3ft high. Is your bamboo Sasa palmata? It has nice broad leaves, but it is a scruffy and a determined runner. If you want a better behaved bamboo, look among the species of Phyllostachys.

Where can I buy seed or tubers of Jerusalem artichokes, and how do I cultivate them? — Mrs M.A. Steel, Stafford.

Marshalls of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, sells Jerusalem artichokes (Helianthus tuberosus). They stock the common sort as well as the variety Fuseau, which has less knobby tubers and is easier to peel. However, you may be too late to get dry tubers, so it is better to wait and buy the easy-peel selection because, while it is not vital to peel the tubers when cooking them, it greatly reduces the gaseous effects of artichoke soup on the digestion afterwards. There is nothing at all to growing them. Put the tubers in 4in deep and 12in apart. They will make a row of yellow "sunflowers" 6-7 ft tall, so put them where the shade will not be a problem. They can be used as a vegetable patch wind-break.

Write to Garden Answers, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington St, London E1 9XN. Advice is offered without legal responsibility. We regret that enclosures cannot be returned.



scraped. If your container is outdoors, the problem is more likely to be root aphids which enjoy moister, cooler conditions. Again, the treatment is to drench the roots with an insecticide for aphids.

My tiny cottage garden is dominated by a large ornamental bamboo which, though attractive when new, quickly becomes scruffy and untidy. I wish to replant the small rockery it has taken over and replace it with a more modest screening plant. How do I go about removing it? — Mrs M. Plenderleith, Lincoln.



You will have to dismantle the rockery to get it out. The more vigorous running varieties give bamboos an undesired bad name, and in a small garden with moist soil, they are a disaster. You (or someone) must cut it down and dig as deep as you can. You will pull out masses of knotted, woody root, and sweat buckets. The chances are you will not get it all out in one go, and it might be prudent to wait for a season before



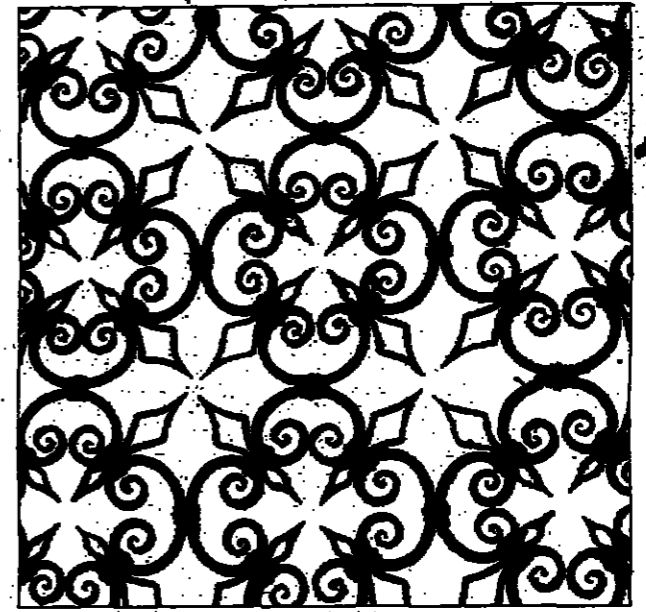
The Duchess remains determined to see through her ambitious £10 million project at Alnwick, where the elements will be fused in a vast high-tech public garden

Kingdom of fire and ice

ME AND MY GARDEN: DUCHESS OF NORTHUMBERLAND



English Heritage, dealing with planning permission, must preserve original features (above and right) while accommodating futuristic design



It is an irony that the woman behind what will be one of this century's largest and most unusual garden projects has had to stop gardening. The Duchess of Northumberland wants to build a remarkable water garden where earth, fire, ice and water mingle with the plants at Alnwick in Northumberland. The scale and complexity of the project is almost overwhelming.

"I hope when this garden is built that I will be able to go back to gardening," says the Duchess who, frankly, cannot be serious.

"I am happiest listening to the radio in my greenhouse surrounded by my own pens and labels, dividing plants or taking cuttings. I haven't been able to do anything like that for a while. They have cleared a little corner for me in the big greenhouses here, but it is not the same."

Nothing in the Duchess's life will ever be the same, and the chance of being able to return to a little gentle pottering must be about nil.

Her life changed irrevocably nearly three years ago when her husband inherited

the title unexpectedly. The last Duke died, aged 42, from ME, leaving the responsibility for Alnwick to a couple who had always valued a quiet family life on the estate.

Most of the landscape at Alnwick is by Capability Brown, but a 12-acre derelict Italianate walled garden by William Nesfield presented the Duchess with the opportunity to create an innovative garden to open to the public.

A trust was set up with the Prince of Wales as its patron, and the Belgian father-and-son team Jacques and Peter Wirtz, whose most famous work is probably the Jardin du Carrousel in Paris, were hired to work their magic.

The choice has not endeared the Duchess to the British gardening establishment, but the water garden promises to be spectacularly innovative, employing the latest technology, some of it being used for the first time in Europe.

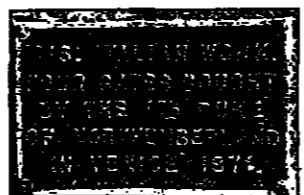
A spiral wall of ice two metres high will grow and disintegrate through the day. Icebergs will form on the main stairway of the cascade running through the centre of the garden. And at night the iceberg will be lit as it glides downwards.

One pool area will shoot balls of water high into the air and, the Duchess hopes, the water balls will be filled with fire. Hidden jets of water will shoot up at random from the ground, an echo of certain Renaissance water tricks, except that these will be powerful and more consistent than their forebears.

A water maze will shoot spouts into the air from clumps of specialist grasses, which at night will be lit in different colours. At any one time, 100,000 gallons of water will be on the move.

A garden for the blind will have raised beds planted with strong-smelling herbs and flowers, and a rose walk will curl about the shape of an unravelling spiral marked out by a box-edged path.

But there will not be a wealth of flowering plants. As the Duchess points out, the Northumberland climate makes all-year-round structure a priority, so the central water feature will be flanked



More Italianate influence

on either side by high yew hedges, and most of the rest of the planting will be hornbeam, beech and oak.

Just as Bowles had his "asylum" of plant oddities, so the Duchess will have her garden of poisonous plants. Set in a curious box-lined layout, which looks from the aerial view like flames flickering, each of the plants will be well labelled to educate children.

And education is as much a part of the garden as entertainment — the Duchess wants visitors to be able to learn about garden design, horticulture and the many possibilities of water as a feature, not that many of us can or would want to aspire to icebergs in our back yards.

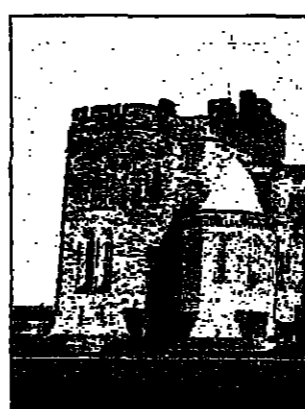
At the top of the north-facing site, which looks down across the Capability Brown landscape at Alnwick, is a two-acre walled garden that will be turned into a working fruit and vegetable garden, kept as organically as possible.

The ground plan is a curious mixture. At first glance it appears traditional, but everything is warped: there is no attempt at symmetry other than in the central water feature.

Everything bar planning permission is in place: the £10 million sponsorship is almost certain, along with detailed plans, a CD-Rom mock-up of the garden and a team of



This 12-acre derelict walled garden will soon be transformed

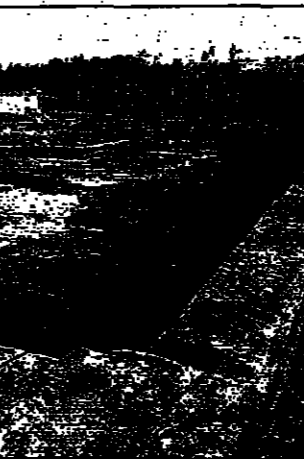


A brand-new water garden and ice sculptures will contrast with the ancient castle

60 Newcastle landscapers to carry out the work.

It is the planning permission, however, that continues to give the Duchess her greatest headache. When the Duchess took over Alnwick, the Nesfield garden was in the process of being turned into a car park.

She stopped the work immediately and, in consultation with English Heritage, spent £50,000 fine-tuning plans to



This 12-acre derelict walled garden will soon be transformed



A brand-new water garden and ice sculptures will contrast with the ancient castle

ensure that none of the historic nature of the garden was destroyed.

This is still the pre-planning permission stage and English Heritage plays an influential advisory role with the planning authority.

In such cases, English Heritage is always faced with the same dilemma: how to preserve a garden of some historic value without preventing the creation of a new garden.

"I am happiest listening to the radio in my greenhouse surrounded by my own pens and labels"

There have been times when the project has seemed near impossible, but the Duchess's determination has been shored up by Tim Smit of the Lost Gardens of Heligan, a director of the Alnwick garden.

"He told me to dare to be brave," says the Duchess, whose fragile-looking frame is home to a feisty spirit.

JANE OWEN

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March is a good time to plant or move evergreens, as the weather warms up and root activity begins. Evergreen hedges such as yew and cypress should also be planted now. Pot-grown hedging evergreens will establish better if planted now or in the autumn. Bare-rooted hedging evergreens should be planted now, as the season has got off to an early start, and should be watered well over the next three months. Protect exposed plants from wind until they are established.

main branches to ensure a more telling flush of coppery spring foliage. Sow onions, leeks, celery and celeriac indoors. Celery can usefully be sown in individual small pots or modules, to ensure there is no check from root disturbance when it is planted out later. Sow asters, nemesis, petunias and marigolds in pots or trays in a greenhouse or on a window ledge. Sweet peas should be sown in individual pots. Mulch strawberry plants generously with well-rotted manure or compost both to feed them and to conserve moisture at the root.

Don't panic, it's the kindest cut

Many gardeners panic at the thought of pruning. They are unsure of what they should be doing and afraid of making a total disaster. But they should relax. It's really not difficult. Always remember three things: most shrubs do not need regular pruning; if you get regular pruning wrong, things will grow again, and if you don't prune, nothing terrible will happen. You can make up for it next year.

The great thing about pruning is that it helps you get to know plants by looking closely at their shape and seeing how they respond to cutting. It builds confidence. Like clearing out a shed, it is remarkably satisfying. Give me pruning over digging any day.

Here are some common plants, found in almost every garden, which will benefit from pruning now.

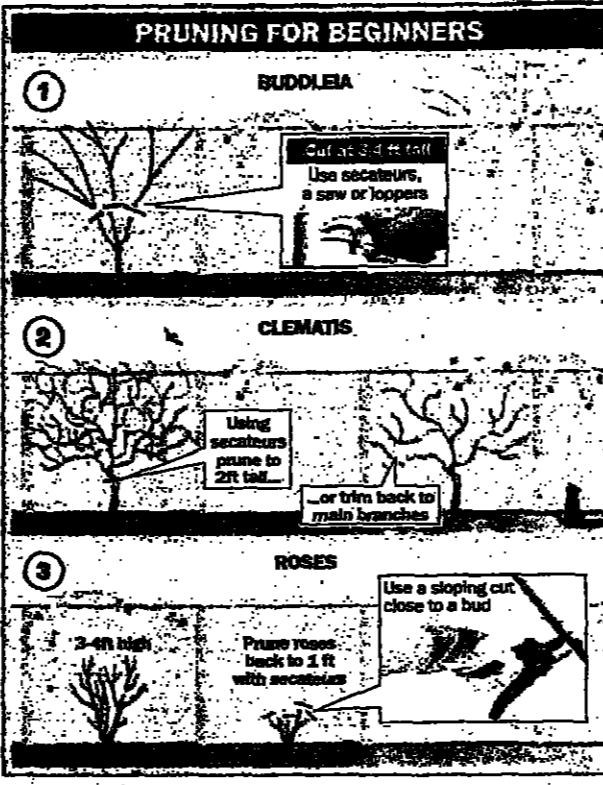
Buddleia
Buddleias (Butterfly Bushes) are familiar to everyone for their long pointed leaves and plumes of purple, blue or white flowers in summer. Just now they are looking pretty miserable, leafless, but with some small, new, rather greyish leaves showing here and there all over the bush. All last year's 5-ft wands of growth will be lashing about in the wind, and threatening to grow just as far again over the coming season.

Pruning could not be easier. It's just a matter of cutting back last year's growth to a framework of older wood somewhere between 2ft and 4ft high. Over the years the framework may change, as young shoots come up from the base and offer you younger, fresher pieces of framework, at which point some of the old framework can be cut away - too when you prune.

New shoots pushing out low down on the bush can be left. They, too, will shoot up hard and flower as the season progresses.

Secateurs will do most of the pruning on a buddleia, but occasionally you may need loppers or a saw to get through a bigger stem. Make the cuts immediately above a strong pair of opposite buds.

A buddleia that has missed a year or more's pruning will certainly require a saw to take it down. But it will still respond, so bring it down to a manageable height. You may



pruning now, earlier in the season, as growth begins. Each year they put on 8-12ft of growth which, if left unpruned, produces an untidy tangle. The size of the flowers diminishes, all produced at the top of the plant.

There are two ways to prune, depending on the variety of clematis you have. Those that flower early and late in the season need gentler pruning (eg. 'Nelly Moser', 'Marle Boissier', 'Lauraster', and double 'Vivian Pennell'). Hard pruning removes all the older wood and, with it, the first flush of flowers. So this year cut any unfamiliar clematis back to 6-8ft, generally tidying it up at high level and taking out any dead wood. You may find you are cutting off shoots several inches long which have already started to sprout at the top of the plant, but don't worry about that. Pruning will encourage more valuable shoots low down.

If it then flowers in June and September, prune the same way next year; you have an early flowerer. If it only flowers in August-September, it is a late-season-only clematis, and can be pruned down hard to 2ft in February/March.

Bush roses
The rose bushes which require particular spring pruning are the modern large-flowered (hybrid tea) and cluster-flowered (floribunda) roses. Large-

flowered roses grow to about 3ft and produce their flowers singly. Cluster-flowered roses grow anywhere between 5ft and 6ft and produce their flowers in bunches. (Old-fashioned English roses can be left alone at this time of year.)

Both kinds of bush roses need to be made to produce plenty of vigorous new wood low down in the bush, and therefore they can be pruned hard now, always cutting just above an outward pointing bud. Expect to take away two-thirds of the plant, leaving the strongest new shoots at a third of their length, and cutting out some older stems at the base. Thin, wispy growths may be cut out entirely.

Stucky single-flowered roses like 'Peace' and 'Ruby Wedding' can stand the hardest pruning, and may be taken down to 12 inches. The taller cluster-flowered roses like 'Iceberg', 'Mountbatten' and 'The Times Rose' are better treated more gently, leaving a framework 2-3ft high.

The most vigorous, such as 'The Queen Elizabeth', which will grow to 8-10ft, need to have old wood taken out low every year, to keep young wood coming from the base. Without such attention they quickly get taller and taller, and woody and woody, until the whole thing has to be cut down in spring.



Pruning may seem difficult but it's hard to do any damage

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240 THE12

WEEKEND COURSES AND ACTIVITIES

Hobbies that give you a buzz

MARCH 20-22

Dowsing for beginners. With the British Society of Dowsers (01233 750230). At the Hawkwood College, Stroud, Gloucester. Price £146 residential, £70 non-residential.

Swimming, steam room, sauna (the Aquila Spa Package). A fitness and nutritional analysis precedes a weekend of treatments and personal training at the Spread Eagle Hotel and Health Spa, Midhurst, Sussex (01730 816911). Price £98 per head per night, half board, including personal trainer.

Winter hillwalking. An introductory course with Caledonian Discovery at Fort William (01397 772167). Price £132, including full board.

Bee-keeping. Introduction to the Internet. Calligraphy for beginners. Painting - a beheading medium. At the Old Rectory, Fildesworth, Pulborough, West Sussex (01798 865306). From £114 residential, £90 non-residential.

Touch wood, the survival story of old superstitions. The history of parks and gardens. Dowsing. A voice workshop. At Knuston Hall, Irchester (01933 312104). Price £120 per course, inclusive.

Eminent Victorians. A German weekend. Beowulf and Old English historic poetry. Reading Classical Greek. A selection of courses at the University of Cambridge, Madingley Hall. Price £120 per course, inclusive.

Health and fitness. At the Priory Hotel, Weston Road, Bath (01225 331922), close to the centre of Roman and Georgian Bath, with spa, steam room, fully equipped gym, indoor pool. Price £220 for the weekend, including dinner, B&B, use of facilities.

Fresh air and fine houses. A local history weekend in Essex and Suffolk, with Peter Lawrence at the Field Study Centre, Flatford Mill, East Bergholt, Essex (01206 298283). Price £105 residential, £82 non-residential.

Garden appreciation: Medieval art and architecture. Spring into art. Lace. At the Hill Residential College, Abergavenny (01495 333777). Price from £88-£98 inclusive.

Competitive chess. International folk dance from France, Germany, Sweden, Russia and Israel. Mounting and framing pictures. A selection of the activities available



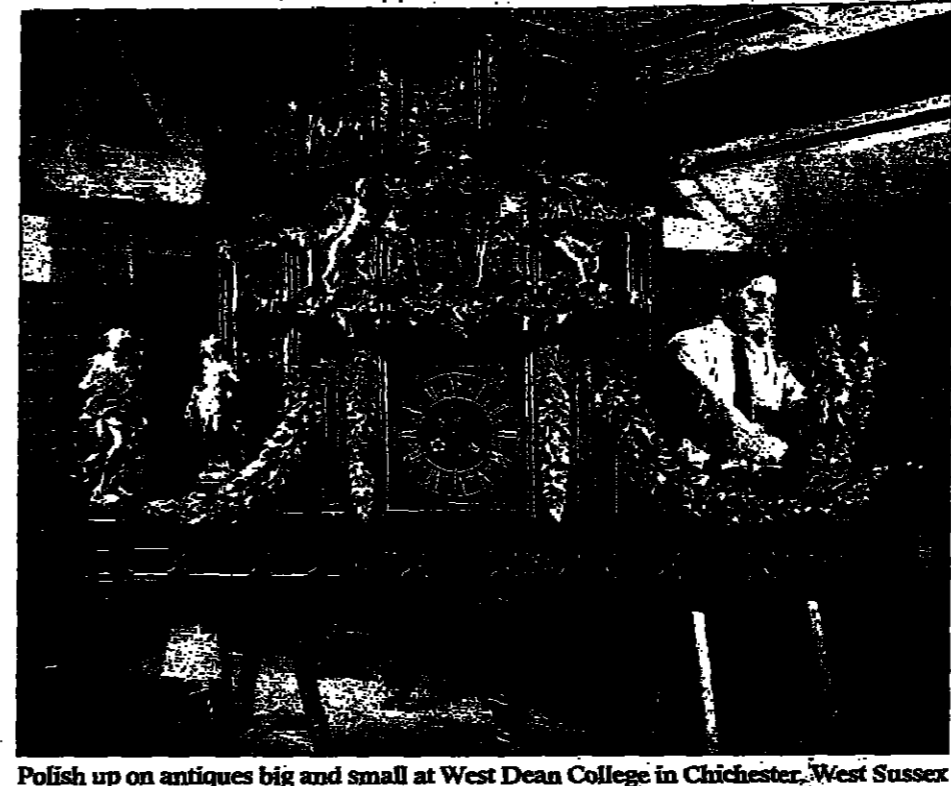
Learn the art of bee-keeping in Pulborough, West Sussex, next weekend

this weekend at the Earnley Concourse, Chichester, West Sussex (01243 670392). Prices from £142 residential, £98 non-residential.

MARCH 27-29

Massage for relaxation. Bedfordshire lace. Both this weekend at the Urchfont Manor College, Devizes, Wiltshire (01380 840495). Prices from £99-£104.

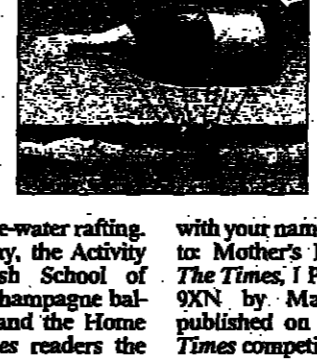
The cottage garden. Slavery, seamen and smugglers, the trade of the West Country ports, 1600-1850. Music in Vienna, 1890-1945. Giants, dragons and pixies. West Country legends and folklore. A Greek experience. A selection of courses at Dillington House, Ilminster, Somerset (01460 53866). Residential prices from £110. Daily rates from £24.



Polish up on antiques big and small at West Dean College in Chichester, West Sussex

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IF YOU WANT to give your mother a Mother's Day present she will never forget, why not take her hot-air ballooning with the Activity Superstore (01799 526526). The company offers a variety of outdoor activities, from flying a 1930s Tiger Moth to driving a Chief tank and white-water rafting.



chance to win a voucher worth £255, valid for one year, for a hot-air balloon flight for two. To win, simply answer the following question: "Who were the two men who manned the first flight in a hot-air balloon?"

Answers on a postcard with your name, address and phone number to: Mother's Day Competition, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9KN by March 19. Winners will be published on Saturday, March 21. Usual Times competition rules apply.

weekend at the Earnley Concourse, Chichester, West Sussex (01243 670392). Price from £142 residential, £98 non-residential.

Writing for radio, writing dialogue, writing full stop. Reading post-colonial writing. Greeks and Romans around the Bay of Naples. All this weekend at the University of Cambridge, Madingley Hall (01954 210636). Price £120 per course, inclusive.

Map and compass work for walkers. Singing for the deaf. Painting spring. The world of Spanish. At the Old Rectory, Fildesworth, Pulborough, West Sussex (01798 865306). From £114 residential, £90 non-residential.

Rescue and emergency care. A useful course for hill-walkers, climbers and lovers of the great outdoors. At the Castle House Field Centre, Crange-over-Sands, Cumbria (01525 443300). From £127 inclusive.

Stick making. Chinese brush painting. Tapestry weaving. All at Wrenston Lodge, King Street, Norwich (01603 66602). Price £84 per course, inclusive.

Wildlife gardening for families. Suffolk's medieval houses. Improve your water-colours. Painting and drawing for families. At the Flatford Mill Centre, East Bergholt, Essex (01206 298283). From £82.

Advanced malt whisky. Picture framing. At Higham Hall, Bassenthwaite, Cumbria (01768 776276). From £122. Beginners' guide to the night sky. A pianist's journey through the 19th century. At Urchfont Manor College, Devizes, Wiltshire (01380 840495). From £98 residential, £78 non-residential.

Birdwatching for beginners. At the Juniper Hall Field Centre, Dorking, Surrey (01306 883849). From £111 residential, £85 non-residential.

Making longbows. A complete course on the weapon of the Hundred Years War at Barn Crafts, Fincham, Norfolk (01366 347841). From £30 per day.

Railway weekend's weekend. Writing for television. Celtic lettering. All this weekend at Missenden Abbey, Great Missenden, Bucks (01494 892096). Prices from £159 residential, £69 non-residential.

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Boom to rates Dublin fair ci

FPD

Boom town rates in Dublin's fair city

Escalating house prices have sent the Irish capital's first-time buyers into a panic. Audrey Magee reports

The queues start early. People arrive with flasks, sandwiches and umbrellas to wait for hours in the cold and wet Irish winter until the houses are put on the market.

In a property boom spiralling out of control, most people in Dublin buy from plans, put down a £2,000 deposit and wait for up to two years for work to be completed. Most are not buying the house of their dreams but, in a market gone mad, it is all they can afford.

Ireland, and Dublin in particular, is facing its fourth successive year of house-price rises. They rose by 15 per cent in 1995, by 20 per cent in 1996 and by up to 30 per cent last year. A starter home in sprawling west Dublin that cost about £55,000 three years ago is now £100,000. New one-bedroom apartments in the city sell for up to £100,000.

Exclusive homes in south Dublin regularly sell for more than £1 million. Last year's most expensive house sold for around £3 million in Killiney, the wealthy seaside suburb that is home to Bono of U2 and racing driver Damon Hill.

While this is wonderful for people who can afford property, the boom is bad news for those of more modest means. Teachers, civil servants and secretaries are finding it impossible to buy in Dublin. They are renting, or joining the fast-growing band of commuters who travel up to 70 miles to their city offices.



Niamh Buckley and Paul Rodin (left) queued for hours to buy a three-bedroom house in Cyber Plains, near Leixlip, Co Kildare, for £120,000

Rodin, a software engineer, bought a three-bedroom house in Leixlip, Co Kildare, for £120,000. Ten miles from Dublin city centre, it is all they can afford. The house, scheduled for completion in six months, is in Cyber Plains, a new development designed to attract people working in the booming computer industry.

"We were frightened about the way things were going," says 26-year-old Ms Buckley. "We came to have a look this morning, liked it and bought."

The urban sprawl is worrying environmentalists, too, as more agricultural land is designated for housing and commuters block Dublin with traffic jams. Women worry that the new need for two incomes to sustain mortgages eliminates their option of leaving work to look after children. Ms Buckley, who works for a shipping company, says she and her partner's plans to start a family are now on hold. The Government, under



SINGLE and looking for a house in Dublin? The only way most people manage is by taking in a tenant and dodging the taxman. Banks and building societies are now accepting the prospect of a tenant's rental as collateral when handing out mortgages to first-time buyers.

Dermot Doyle (a pseudonym) has borrowed three times his salary to buy a £78,000 house on the edge of an industrial estate in west Dublin. The building society gave it to him on condition that he takes in a tenant. "It's not something I want to do because I would rather have my house to myself. But I had little choice," says Mr Doyle, a 25-year-old computer engineer

pressure to resolve the housing crisis, has commissioned a report, due out at the end of this month, to establish the causes of the boom and possible solutions. Among issues it will examine are stamp duty of 9 per cent on established houses worth more than £170,000, and the role of investors who currently own

about half the inner-city apartment schemes.

The success of the economy and low interest rates go some way to explaining the housing boom. But there has also been a large increase in the population. Thousands of Irish people living in Britain, America and Australia are returning home to jobs in computer

CASE HISTORY

who recently moved back to Ireland after four years working abroad. His new home is a two-bedroom bungalow in a cul-de-sac about four miles from the city centre. "It's not a great area but, given the way things are going, I think I have been incredibly lucky to get anywhere so close to the city."

Mr Doyle, who moves in next month, originally wanted to buy an established house but was priced out of the market by government stamp duty. Buying a new house relieves him of having to pay stamp duty and entitles him to a £3,000 first-time buyer's grant.

His mortgage repayments will be £460 a month, and he hopes that almost half that amount will come from the tenant. He is looking for £220 a month but will settle for £190 if the tenant agrees not to declare the rental to the taxman. In a scheme designed by the Government to root out untaxed rental incomes, tenants in Ireland are entitled to claim a £500 allowance on their rent — but only if they declare the landlord's details. Non-declaration will leave Mr Doyle free from a tax bill.

"I know it's not right to fiddle the system but if I have to pay tax on the rent I receive, I'll never be able to afford the house. I'd have more than £1,000 in tax to pay on the rent and I'd never manage."

People hope the crisis will abate, but estate agents say there is little chance of a sudden crash. "Ireland is just catching up with the rest of Europe," says Peter Lawlor, an estate agent in Dún Laoghaire.

"I think the best we can hope for is a levelling off over the next couple of years."

SMART MOVES



THE FORMER home of the Honorable Diana and Sir Oswald Mosley (above), the Grade II listed Upper Ifold House near Dunsfold, Surrey, is on sale for £950,000. The house has eight bedrooms, four bathrooms and a cinema in the attic. Among its 8.5 acres are a self-contained two-bedroom cottage, a stable block and paddocks. Sir Oswald lived there in 1924-27, before his "blackshirt" days.



ENGLAND cricket star Mike Gatting (left) has bought a three-bedroom villa at the exclusive Royal Westmoreland estate in Barbados — just in time for the current Test match on the island. The estate, where prices range from £355,000 to £5 million, is in the hills of the Parish of St James, next to a golf course, and has views over the Caribbean.

THE FORMER home of Laurie Wisefield (right), guitarist with rock band Wishbone Ash, is on sale for £265,000 through Bedfords. The five-bedroom, 16th-century Rylands Cottage in Steeple Bumpstead, Essex, has just under two acres of land with gardens and a stable yard. Wisefield composed many of the group's songs in the cottage's top-floor studio.



THOMSON CURRIE is asking £595,000 for the four-bedroom Islington maisonette of Jon Blair, the Oscar-winning film director and co-founder of *Spitting Image* (left). The Victorian property has a number of period features, including a spacious dining and reception room with 11ft-high ceiling.

ADAM BARNARD



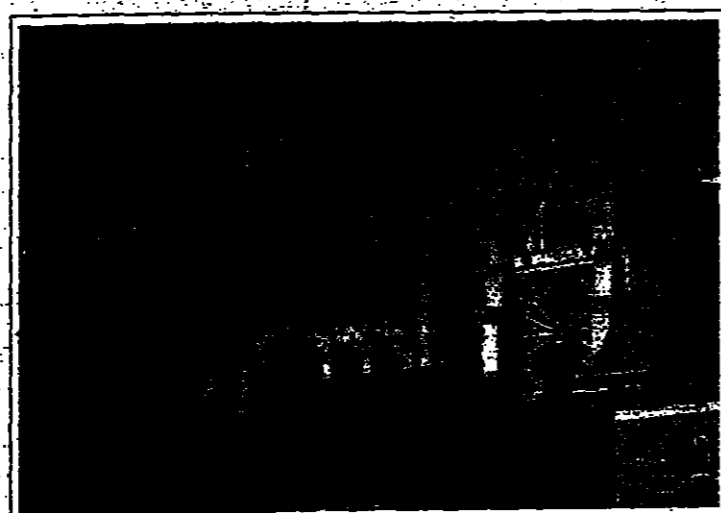
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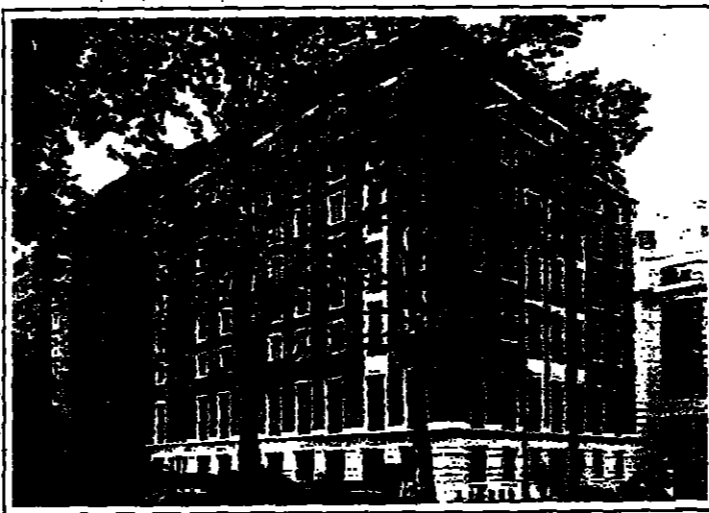
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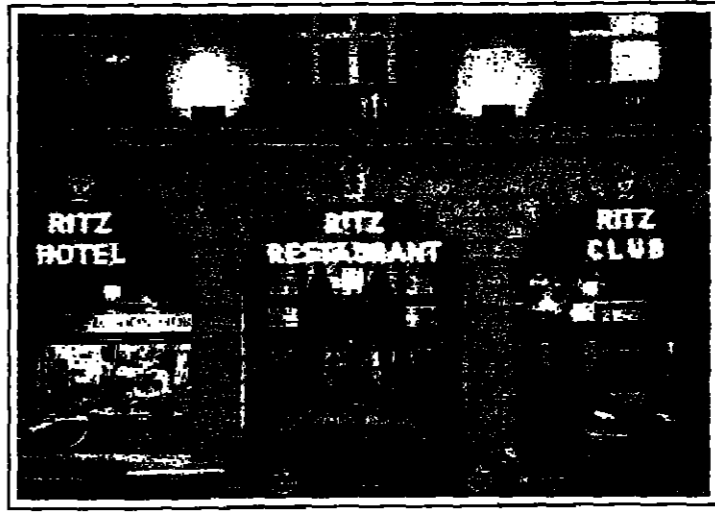
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£35 million will not buy a manor house in Yorkshire, but it will buy 18 sq miles of agricultural land, Ronald Faux writes



Warter Priory, "one of Yorkshire's greatest country houses", was demolished in 1972

Cast your eyes over land and Warter

ESTATE OF THE WEEK

Coincidence or signal? Barely have the footfalls died of 280,000 country folk parading their anger through central London over "threats" to rural life, than the most expensive in-hand estate for decades goes on the market.

Warter Priory, some 18 sq miles of the Yorkshire Wolds, including the village of Warter, is to be sold by the Marquis of Normanby for about £35 million. The peer's father bought the estate in 1968 for £4 million following the death of the then owner, George Ellis Vestey.

The agent, Savills, is quick to scotch rumours that a celebrity buyer is already reaching for his chequebook to acquire the rolling, ring-fenced acres of fertile farmland. Suggestions that Mick Jagger, Sir Elton John, Richard Branson or even Prince Andrew might be interested, or had even been spotted inspecting Warter's neat heidgewors, brought out the TV cameras and sent a frisson of concern through this peaceful squirearchy.

The Marquis himself, aka the novelist Constantine Phipps, is seeking to concentrate resources on his 50,000-acre family seat, Mulgrave Castle at Lythe, near Whitby, and declined to be interviewed about the disposal of the estate.

Michael Mylne, chairman of Warter Parish Council and one of a small number of owner-occupiers on the estate, does not expect to be hosting any famous personalities in



The carved oak fireplace from the bulldozed grand house

the parish. "This is not a place for playboys," he says. "It is one of the finest agricultural estates in England. Under the present ownership it has been very efficiently and progressively run. But there is no grand house, the sort of place that a wealthy celebrity would be looking for. If they wanted a house, they would have to build it."

The driveway to Warter Priory leads only to an empty space where the mansion once

stood. It was demolished without protest in 1972, having once been described as one of Yorkshire's greatest country houses, an architectural gem. Alternatively, it was viewed as a Victorian monstrosity, with more than 100 rooms, more windows than the year has days and requiring a bottomless pocket to maintain.

This French-style grand house, which at one time had 40 servants, a marble staircase and a magnificent oak fire-



An aerial view of the village of Warter and surrounding agricultural land, which form part of the 18 sq miles of Warter Priory estate in the Yorkshire Wolds

place ("one of the most elaborately carved ones ever seen in a country mansion", according to one expert appraisal), was summarily bulldozed into its own ornamental lake, where its stones still lie.

Some former servants live in the village properties tied to the estate, which covers sweeping folds of open countryside, with the vast fields of modern agriculture intersected by wooded dales that have made Warter Priory a prime shooting estate. The 8,080 acres of Grade II and III arable land yield wheat, barley, oil-seed rape and peas. There are three herds of cattle and sheep, 1,960 acres of grass and dale, 1,060 acres of woodland, and 630 acres of lot land. The estate has five full agricultural tenancies, and mechanisation has reduced the workforce from a land army to around two dozen workers.

The Marquis, along with James Goodhart, his farms director who is now retired, are credited with bringing Warter Priory into the 20th century. The fields may be large but the hedgerows dividing them are planned so that they lead to an abundance of copse woodland, where wildlife may breed.

"It would be sad to see the land sold off in separate lots," Mr Mylne says. "I see nothing wrong in having a patrician landowner who cares for the estate. For example, they stood no nonsense from a Greek shipping magnate who had the shooting in the early 1970s. His party shot 3,000 birds in one day. They shot everything they moved. When they ran out of ammunition they went off to Pocklington for more. The damage was considerable and they were ordered off. The shooting has since recovered and it is the Dutch aristocracy who now have the rights."

He is less approving of the patrician attitude taken in Victorian times by Lady Numburnholme who, returning from church one Sunday evening, saw from her carriage a group of estate workers the worse for drink. She promptly ordered Warter's only pub to close. It has never reopened.

The village ranks more as a hamlet and lies with its pond and huddle of cottages in a deep fold of the Wolds. The church is closed and was recently saved from demolition, but the primary school, which two years ago voted to



Picturesque thatched cottages and the village green in Warter, where some of the former servants live

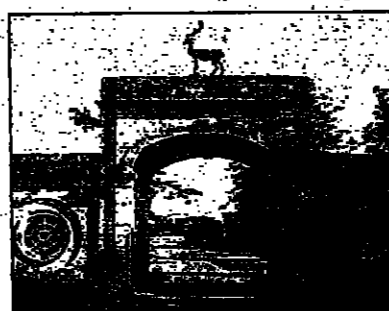
MARKET COMMENT ON BRITISH ESTATES

THE traditional definition of an English or Welsh estate involves a large house, a home farm and rented farms, plus sporting opportunities (though the size could range enormously, from 150 to 10,000 acres).

But the wealthy UK and international buyers who spend from £2 million to £12 million may have a number of reasons for buying such substantial land holdings. One is the desire to own a large tract of attractive countryside and, in that respect, buyers take into account several factors.

"Location is the principal one," says Andrew Jones of national land agents Clegg Kennedy Drewe. Good road connections are a big pull, together with easy access to international airports; genteel southern counties such as Hampshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire remain the hottest corners of Britain.

Privacy is also important, according to Mr Jones: value is added by the lack of roads or public rights of way within the vicinity of the main house. Beyond that, people are looking for amenity value: fishing or shooting are popular, but also the simple pleasure of fine parkland and maybe a lake. An ongoing



Peacock Lodge, Dorset

relief, reinvestment relief, capital gains tax bonuses for investors in farmland and 100 per cent relief from inheritance tax for farm assets that have been passed on. The last two Budgets have not changed this, though it would be a bold investor who ignored the storm clouds. But land prices are buoyant, even though

farming returns are down and the strong pound has cut the value of EU grants by 19 per cent over the past two years.

What the Marquis of Normanby makes of this is not recorded. His two novels give few clues. *Careful with the Sharks* is a jolly romp, somewhere between *Scoop* and *Wilt*. But *Among the Thin*

shortage of estates, coupled with a lot of unused money, means that on the rare occasions when "the right kind" of property comes on to the market, buyers will pay whatever it takes to secure it. "If it's £5 million and they have been looking for four or five years, and it's bid up to £8 million, they'll pay it," Mr Jones says.

The other prime attraction is the tax reinvestment relief granted on capital gains rolled over from the sale of a company, say, into agricultural land—but it has to be farmed by the owner rather than by a tenant farmer. However, day-to-day management can be handed over to a company or an individual so that the land is farmed on your behalf. This means you can have as much active involvement as you wish.

In Scotland, estate sizes are larger—40,000 acres at the upper end—and the emphasis is on forestry, moorland and sport, to the extent that estates are valued partially in terms of the grouse, salmon or deer potential. But there are still excellent agricultural opportunities in lush Border areas.

FAITH GLASGOW

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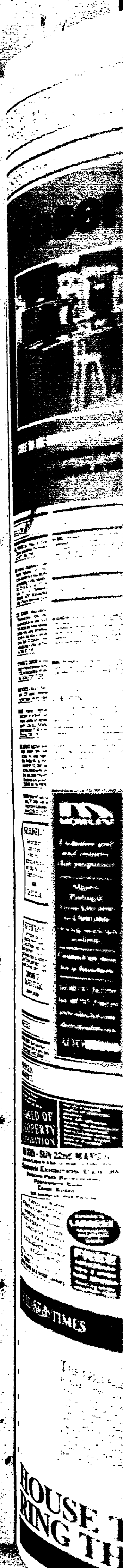
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CHANGING TIMES



'If you lose anything on an outdoor pig unit you'll always find it in the water trough — whether it's a penknife or an old gun shell casing'

Yesterday, someone irresponsible in the pub told my husband that the price of pigs had now fallen so low that you could buy a piglet for £4. As a result, our whole household has been swept by piglet fever. We've kept pigs in the past, and it hasn't been a success. For some reason we tend to get the kind that are experts at escaping, have no interest in keeping clean, and manage to eat hugely without putting on any weight.

When to bring home the bacon

both sinewy, weatherbeaten and in their thirties, and while Lester — the financial expert — has uncompromising views on farming, Mike tends to come out with amazing stories about pig behaviour. They told me that it was a popular misconception to think that it was more humane to keep pigs in an outdoor unit. The old, cruel tether-and-stall methods are about to be outlawed, and indoor straw systems can be very comfortable. As Lester put it: "At 3 o'clock on a February morning, with a minus wind-chill factor, it's questionable whether it's more welfare-friendly to keep a pig outside."

DOWN TO EARTH



LUCY PINNEY

and Mike do, you need to have exactly the right kind of land. It has to be flat and free-draining, which means stony or sandy soil. This is because you have to be able to get to the pigs with a tractor in all weathers, but pigs themselves have another, more personal, reason for liking stony soil. They have a thing about stones, especially small, rounded ones. As I walked across the farm I became aware of a pervasive and unusual noise, a mixture between clicking and sucking, like change being stirred in a wet trouser pocket. This was the sound of sows chewing on little white stones as if they were gum. The only place they ever drop them, Mike told me, "is in the water troughs. So we constantly have to shovel out kilos of stones. The trick is not to stand in the water trough, fall over and grab the electric pig wire, because tumans, water and 7,000 volts definitely do not mix. I've only done it once."

and three people always have to handle her: two to do the work and one to watch their backs. "It's surprising how fast you can run when O's in a bad mood," Mike said thoughtfully. "It's better exercise than skiing to have 30 stone of angry sow after you."

Starling gazing

IT HAS been reported that the townfolk of Stamford Brook, near York, are suffering from a plague of starlings. A flock of 5,000 of these jaunty birds comes to roost in some cypress trees by the River Derwent each night, and sprays the town with droppings as it circles round overhead.

FEATHER REPORT

they are a glossy black, with iridescent gleams of purple on their back, shining green on their head and wings, and bronze on their flanks. They also have a yellow beak and are singing most of the time. They like singing on chimney pots near a hole under the eaves, mingling the sounds of mewling cats and croaking frogs with their clicks and whistles and occasional musical outbursts. They often flap their wings and puff out their throat feathers as they sing, in order to warn off other males or attract a mate. I once saw a starling start to sing and flap its wings on a London roof as an enormous flock of other starlings flew over — either



Metal detector Bert Douch (centre) is the envy of his friends after finding two hoards of rare treasure — "it is like winning the Lottery twice"



A starling was recently seen at Waterloo station

DERWENT MAY
What's about: Birders — watch for sandmartins over lakes, reservoirs and flooded gravel pits. Titchers — Ross's gull, Lerkwick, Sheildon, American herring gull, Killibegs, Co Donagall, hoopoe, Charlestown, Dorset. Details from Birdline (081 700222). Calls cost 50p a minute.

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Today The Times offers readers the chance to purchase one ticket at £7 for the Your Health Show at the Business Design Centre, Islington, London N1, between Friday April 3 and Sunday April 5, and receive another ticket free. There will be two hundred stands at the show covering aspects of healthy living from the Alexander Technique to organic gardens, herbalism, to laser surgery, soya foods to workout wear. Talks by experts are free, you can try out the latest in fitness equipment, vitamins and bodycare products. Plus, with each ticket, you receive a book of vouchers worth £100 to spend at the show.

EXCLUSIVE TIMES GOODY BAG

The first 1,250 readers who book will receive two goody bags containing: *Folk Remedies for Common Ailments* by Anne McIntyre, worth £8.50, a £5 voucher off £25 spent on the Revital stand and a £3 voucher off head massage and facial rejuvenation at the London Centre of Indian Champissage, which costs between £15-£20.

your health Show

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CHANGING TIMES

The man with the Midas touch

Peter Birkett unearths the secrets of a professional treasure hunter

He is the Midas of metal detecting, a man whose luck and intuition have made him Britain's most successful treasure hunter. Bert Douch is that rarity in the optimistic world of those who scour the countryside for buried bounty because he has twice pulled off the feat that other anorak enthusiasts spend their waking hours daydreaming about. In the detecting business they call him a two-ward man.



Phil Collins (left) and Bert Douch with their booty.

New Romney, most bearing the head of Edward the Confessor and one bearing that of his predecessor King Canute. "We got out a bottle of white wine and we drank a toast to Edward the Confessor," says Mr Douch. Then he went home to Hastings and broke the news to his wife, Joyce.

The men, members of the detecting club the Hastings Area Recovery and Preservation Society, returned repeatedly to the site to make sure nothing had been overlooked. By mid-September their total was a staggering 260 coins, plus fragments of the pottery jar which once contained it. The actual value has still to be assessed by the Government's Treasure Review Committee but Dr Gareth Williams, curator of medieval coins at the British Museum, who says it is the find of the century, puts it at around £100,000.

'My heart gave a lurch. I knew they were valuable'

During 16 years of treasure hunting the 69-year-old retired train driver from Hastings, East Sussex, has found more than 600 ancient bronze and silver coins. His biggest and latest discovery, 490 rare silver Anglo Saxon coins worth a conservative £100,000, was so important that the British Museum called it "the find of the century".

149 Roman coins, 59 of them silver and the rest bronze, known as the Hastings Roman Hoard. Incredibly, they also found a piece of 3,000-year-old Roman string, the drawing of a long-robed leather bag which had contained the hoard. Several of the coins are in the British Museum and the rest, with the string, are in the Hastings town museum.

But treasure hunting is not, Mr Douch says, all luck. An intimate knowledge of the sounds made by the metal detector is vital. "You get to know from the type of signals you are getting, the sort of metal that is down there. You can actually tell lead from gold and gold from silver but my rule is always if in doubt, dig it up."



Coughton has been spring cleaned for two solid months

A working family concern

Philip Delves Broughton lifts the dust covers on a country home going public

Throckmortons have lived at Coughton Court in Warwickshire since the 15th century, but none of them can compare with the latest resident, Clare Throckmorton, QC, expert on European Community law, tapestry maker and now stately home tycoon. A woman of powerful build and conviction, she inherited Coughton — pronounced "Coat-on" — in 1991 and is determined to turn it into a going business concern. It would be a fool or a maniac who tried to stop her. Like hundreds of stately homes across Britain, Coughton is bracing itself for the annual onslaught of thousands of visitors. "Morning, hello, come along," she cries, whizzing from her private quarters through the stone hallway to meet her staff and stewards, on the Saturday before Coughton opens to the public. Recent surgery means she now patrols her home in an electric buggy. Speed is a useful addition to her already bulging managerial kit-bag. More than a hundred of Coughton's volunteer staff,



The front hall

who will be spending the next seven months keeping an eye on and helping an anticipated 75,000 visitors, have gathered in the red-walled salon, for Mrs Throckmorton's pep talk. "Welcome," she begins. "Coughton is lived in, was built by and is run by the family." Beside her sits her husband, Andrew McLaren, a former marketing executive who runs the house on a day-to-day basis. "Andrew turns 66 this year and I will be 63, and we have thought you are barking, staring mad to be doing this rather than retiring to a two-up, two-down."



Like the rest of Coughton, the tapestry dressing room has been given a facelift. Every wooden panel has been cleaned, waxed and polished and every page in every book dusted



Last year 60,000 people visited Coughton. This year, it hopes to attract 75,000

Throckmorton stashed away during a successful career at the Bar. In 1991, when the National Trust ran the house, and before Mrs Throckmorton stepped in, only 29,000 people visited Coughton. Last year, more than 60,000 came. It was a serious wrench, however, for Mrs Throckmorton to leave her legal career and devote herself to the house.

'We must be barking, staring mad to be doing this instead of retiring to a two-up, two-down'

"I couldn't even go near Temple for two years after I left the Bar," she says. "I missed it so much." Although she spent long periods of her youth at Coughton with her grandmother, she never expected to inherit it. Lack of Throckmorton men and a string of unexpected deaths, however, meant that in 1991 when her uncle died, the house came her way. Sorting out death duties alone took two years. Then it was a simple decision: if she wanted to hang on to the house, she would have to win the Lottery or make its commercial operations work.

The house was given to the National Trust in 1946 by Mrs Throckmorton's grandmother, after a bad run of Throckmorton wasters had whittled down estates which, according to Mrs Throckmorton, "once made the Duke

of Norfolk's look small". In 1992, when Mrs Throckmorton moved into Coughton, she renegotiated with the National Trust, promising to live in and look after the house and the then non-existent gardens and to run her own ancillary Coughton enterprises if they made sure the roof and exterior of the house were kept up to scratch. The arrangement is unique among stately homes.

There are fresh flowers in all the rooms alongside pictures of Mrs Throckmorton's family. The whole place has been shaken out, the old National Trust threads tarted up. The pasture which used to reach right up to the house has been transformed into a vibrant set of gardens, designed and nurtured by Mrs Throckmorton and her daughter Christina Williams, a garden designer. A gift shop, restaurant and plant sales centre are up and running and a food village is close behind.

"I like to think that this house is full of TLC," Mrs Throckmorton tells her volunteers. "Tender, loving care." Her audience, largely retired folk and the occasional young face, beams up at this Billy Graham of country-house evangelism.

There are now 12 full-time staff at Coughton. The closest to the family is Karl Esterhazy, the moustachioed butler. Since January, he has overseen two months of spring cleaning. Every wooden panel has been cleaned, waxed and polished and every page in every old book dusted.

Three full time gardeners are overseen by Philip Swindells, the director of gardens, who has seen 28 acres of farmland transformed over five years into formal gardens and herbaceous borders galore. Ann Fox, a retired headmistress, makes sure that all the stewards are boned up on Coughton's history, which included a long period as a focus of post-Reformation Catholic resistance.

In the restaurant, Paul Burgh, 29, the chef, is testing his ovens and chewing over new menus for the visitors who will be arriving from next week. "The family test everything we serve," he says. Apple snow and spiced chicken, he says, look set for a good 1998. All of this industry, however, is driven by the woman addressing the salon. "Coughton depends on you giving the visitor a fabulous day out."



Clare Throckmorton and her husband Andrew. Right, preparing the dining room



Mrs Throckmorton tells her damp-eyed audience. The generations of Throckmortons looking down from the walls would have to agree she is doing more than her share of making sure of it.

A right pain in the neck

SEVEN LONG DAYS



DAVID BOWKER

IT WAS UNCANNY. Five minutes after agreeing to be a hypochondriac for a week, I started to feel genuinely poorly. My knees hurt, my stomach ached and I seemed to be suffering from mental dullness and nausea. I also developed a headache and a stiff neck. I looked up my complaint in a women's medical dictionary and realised that I'd come down with metabolic toxæmia.

My doctor, believe it or not, is called Dr Payne. He is notoriously reluctant to prescribe antibiotics unless you're suffering from gangrene or beri-beri. In other words, the man's a quack. When I told him what was wrong with me, he laughed and shook his head. "Well, unless you've turned into a lady, Mr Bowker, I find that highly unlikely." Then Dr Payne tried to tell me that metabolic toxæmia only afflicted pregnant women. I argued, but it was no use. The man's mind was made up. He was concerned about the headaches, though. "And you say your neck's stiff?" I nodded, then winced convincingly. "How bad's the pain?" he asked me. "Excruciating, doctor," I assured him. "I'm fighting back the tears, even as we speak."

After a long silence, the doctor conceded that I might have something called cervical neuralgia. I said: "Make your mind up. You just told me I wasn't a woman. Now suddenly I've got a cervix." Sarcastically, Dr Charlatan told me that cervix was the technical name for a neck. I said: "So a woman's neck is located near her uterus, is it? I think you need to brush up on your human anatomy."

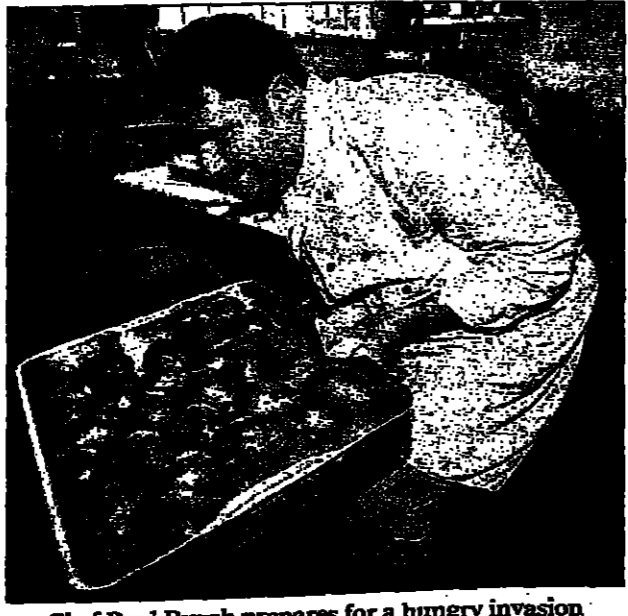
With a great show of weariness, Dr Payne advised me to rest and to wrap towels around my neck. "Why can't I have a neck brace?" I demanded. "Because towels will work just as well," he snapped.

"You mean they're cheaper," I retorted. Dr Payne wouldn't answer. Nor would he give me any painkillers. The man had clearly never been near a medical school in his life. He told me to

come back if my condition didn't alter. This was on Monday. On Tuesday I returned. My condition hadn't altered. There was still nothing wrong with me. Surgery didn't start until 2.30pm, but in true hypochondriac style I turned up an hour earlier to ensure that I was first in the queue. When the doctor arrived, I greeted him like an old friend and tried to follow him into his office. "Not yet," he said peevishly. "Wait until you're called."

Five minutes later, I entered his surgery and told him that I'd located the problem. "It's not cervical whatsisname," I informed him. "I think I've damaged my sphenoid bone." Dr Payne wanted to know where I'd come across this phrase. I admitted that I'd been reading a proper medical dictionary, not just a women's one, and discovered that the sphenoid is the large bone at the base of the skull. "Mr Bowker," said the doctor, "have you ever heard the maxim 'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing'?" I told him that I had.

"What do you think it means?" he asked patronisingly. I said I thought it meant that people who know as little as doctors are extremely dangerous. Dr Payne didn't laugh. But at least he gave me some painkillers. The next day, there was no surgery. I rang up the receptionist to ask what a critical case like myself was supposed to do. She asked what was wrong with me. I told her that my cervical neuralgia had cleared up, but I'd gone lame in the night. Grudgingly, she admitted that there was an emergency surgery at 3.30pm. Two hours later I limped into Dr Payne's office. "It's my leg, doctor," I announced. He gazed at me and sighed. "Mr Bowker, are you unhappy about something?" "Yes, doctor," I answered. "I'm unhappy about this limp." He asked me a number of personal questions. Was I sleeping? Did I have a history of mental illness? What did I do for a living? "I'm a writer," I told him. He wrote down "unemployed". Dr Payne told me that there was nothing wrong with me, that all I needed was rest and relaxation. So on Thursday I rested. By Friday, I'd stopped limping and felt fit and well. But as I was getting out of the bath, I glanced in the mirror and noticed that I had a hairy bottom. Afraid that I might be turning into a werewolf, I went back to the doctor.



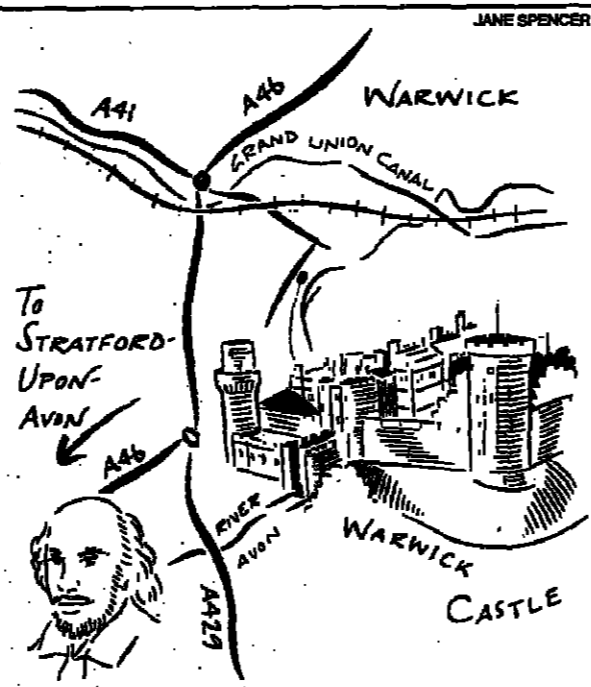
Chef Paul Burgh prepares for a hungry invasion

ON THE SPOT: WARWICKSHIRE

Rural recommendations

The place: the island at Warwick Castle. The view: the south side of the castle dominates the scene with its series of turrets and towers — one with a double parapet. To the left is the bridge over the River Avon and a magnificent oak tree. On the right is a weir and above this, from the town centre, peeps the spire of Warwick Cathedral. Aficionados: visitors to the castle. Historical interest: in the 1890s the Countess of Warwick acquired a menagerie including a baby elephant and a bear which she kept on the island. The castle was established in 1066 by William the Conqueror as a wooden "motte and bailey" but during the next 400 years it became one of the greatest seats of power in the land. OS ref: 284/646 on sheet 151. How to get there: follow signs from A429 and park in town centre or castle grounds. Time to visit: the castle looks stunning in late afternoon sunshine. Open between 10am-5pm. Also nearby: walks along the River Avon and Grand Union Canal. Stratford-upon-Avon is eight miles south.

DEBORAH KING





Veterinary surgeon Mark Scott prepares a puppy for an operation at the Celia Hammond clinic in southeast London



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 Worming tablets - £1.00

Judy Walker offers cut-rate treatments. "A lot of households can't afford standard fees"

Cats and dogs and vets going cheap

Vet fees are increasingly seen as too high. John Young meets two women offering cut-price care

In an age when public images are all-important, that of the veterinary surgeon probably ranks somewhere near the top. Vets have received an invaluable public relations bonanza in the form of a succession of highly popular television series, in which they are portrayed as heroic figures in Barbour jackets and gumboots, ready at a moment's notice to drive out to a remote farm in the freezing darkness to treat a sick animal.

For most vets, the reality is somewhat different. We are a largely urbanised society, and hence a high proportion of practices are in towns and cities where patients are, predominantly if not exclusively, domestic pets: dogs, cats and small furry mammals (rabbits are abidingly popular). And far from being poor country folk, vets in successful urban practices earn a good living —



Celia Hammond wants to see a more competitive market

probably £50,000 a year upwards — made from fees which are increasingly seen as being too expensive.

Although in urban areas most people can afford to pay their fees, there are a growing number of pet-owners who cannot. Even centres created for such pet owners, such as the Blue Cross, the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals and the RSPCA, have to insist that they are only for the worst off in society. Which means that would-be clients are obliged to look elsewhere.

Celia Hammond is one of the growing number of vets who think it is time that a more competitive market was introduced. Having begun rescuing strays, mainly cats, some 30 years ago, she now runs her own charity, the Celia Hammond Animal Trust, based in Wadhurst, East Sussex. Its 12 staff are engaged in rescuing neglected and abandoned animals and in providing cut-price services. At the end of 1995 she opened a clinic in Lewisham, southeast London; is about to open a second in the East End and has plans to expand further within the capital.

"We are targeting people who have never felt able to afford vaccination or neutering," she says. Although the services are not free, they offer considerable savings. Castrating a dog, for example, may cost as little as £30, compared with an average of £70 to £80; spaying a bitch from £35, as opposed to perhaps more than

"We are just providing an extension of the veterinary service," she says. "The traditional practice will continue and is not at risk. We are not poaching anyone's business."

But "poaching" is just what Judy Walker, a vet with a practice in Coventry, is being accused of. She does not deny that, since reducing her charges for vaccination and neutering, she is attracting clients from other practices, but she claims that many of those who come to her surgery say that without her they would not have had the operations performed. "A lot of

households simply can't afford the standard fees," she says. She denies describing her colleagues as greedy. "People are free to charge whatever they like," she says. But she admits that she has attended meetings with colleagues at which they all listed the fees they charged for various operations and reached an informal agreement that no one would go in for any serious undercutting.

"I decided I wanted to open a low-cost practice to ensure that pets got vaccinated and neutered," she says. "I've done work for the National Canine

A VET WRITES

Q My Jack Russell cross, Rocket, is extremely excitable outdoors. Indoors, she's a paragon. In the car she yaps and whines and tries to force her way through the dog guard. She pulls on a lead and tries to chase every passing car or jogger. Would sedatives help?

A Sedatives disguise — they won't solve your problem. A long period of patient training is the only way to defuse Rocket. Put her in the stationary car several times a day. Sit with her and, when she's quiet for a couple of minutes, let her out, praise her and give her a tit-bit. Get into her head that silence brings a reward.

Use similar tactics outdoors. A Halti (a halter-shaped head collar) would help. The lead is attached close to her nose so she has to bend her neck whenever she starts to pull — and can't. Go to dog-training classes. Seeing other problem dogs, and receiving the help of a trainer, could stiffen your resolve to persevere.

Q My friend in New Zealand bought an Otterhound bitch from kennels in England, intending to mate her to one of the few Otterhound dogs there. When the bitch arrived she was limping on her back leg and two vets have diagnosed a genetic abnormality of her hip. What is this and is there any way of recovering some of the costs — more than £3,000?

A Hip dysplasia occurs in many of the larger breeds of dog, including Otterhounds, and basically is an ill-fitting hip joint. The acetabulum (the socket, part of the pelvis) is too shallow or mis-shapen and the head of the femur doesn't fit snugly. Heredity plays a large part in this malformation and most responsible dog breeders have their breeding stock X-rayed and mate only those with the best and soundest hips.

Compensation is a legal question, but as a first step I suggest writing to the vendor, with a copy of the vet's report. If this doesn't produce an offer of some compensation, take legal advice. Whatever the price, a puppy should be fit for the purpose — and this bitch was bought for breeding.

JAMES ALCOCK

Write to The Times Vet, 11 Newington Street, London E1 6NN. Advice is offered without legal responsibility.

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A FAMILY of 42 mice is looking for new a home. The mice, all in good health, vary in colour and age, the youngest being two weeks old and the eldest four months.

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In defence of veterinary fees

People find it easy to generate indignation about other people's earnings. "Fat cat" captains of industry are fair game, as are lawyers and accountants making millions. Yet millionaire pop stars, overpaid footballers and Grand Prix drivers raking in fortunes by driving at high speeds for two hours seem to be immune from criticism.

Now veterinary surgeons have become the latest target — which demands a defence. I can't sing or play football and wouldn't fit into the tiny seat of a racing car. But I don't believe Damon Hill could spray a cat.

And yet veterinary fees for vaccinations and routine operations are under fire. It is said that vaccination costing £4 per dose (bought at the 100-dose rate) can cost the owner £40 (actually £34.04; £5.94 VAT goes to the Exchequer). These figures are true in certain practices. But there's more to vaccination than sticking needles into

dogs — just as a £100 written legal opinion is worth more than six sheets of A4, an envelope and a first-class stamp.

Veterinary practice has to be profitable to exist. Routine work makes money, but daytime emergencies often cost more than can be charged and night emergencies are almost invariably done at a loss.

For example, manning a phone 24 hours a day, 365 days per year, needs at least four people, who have to be paid even if the bell doesn't ring. Avoiding night, evening and weekend calls and working a 35-hour week would allow the vets to lower the cost of routine inoculations and operations. But emergencies would still occur and it is every vet's duty to deal with them.

The profits on routine treatments are needed to cover the (massive) overheads. An eight-handed practice may spend £1,000 a month to dispose of used swabs, syringes and other "clinical waste". And a

well-equipped practice represents a capital investment between £500,000 and £1 million. If the bank is part-owner, it wants its pound of flesh.

It is always worth asking your vet about costs — and how much you are prepared to spend. All too often owners are reluctant to ask — and vets reluctant to discuss — money. There are good reasons for this: vets can take umbrage when fees are mentioned, believing their vet is suggesting they don't care enough to pay for their pet.

A final thought. The drugs, anaesthetics and equipment we use are the same as those in human medicine, and cost the same or more. But top-of-the-range pet health insurance costs only about £150 per year. And do you know any human in a private health scheme who spends as little as this every year?

JAMES ALCOCK

DOG TODAY

IT LOOKS like some joker has forced a tea cosy on to this poor hound's head. But in fact this is a snood, a necessary accessory for Salukis and Afghan hounds, many of which sported them at Crufts last week. A spokesman for the Kennel Club says: "It's a bit like a lady putting on a hairnet to keep herself nice until she goes out." Salukis and Afghan hounds wear snoods to stop them getting their long ears covered in food or biting themselves during feeding. They are available by mail order from Cosy Coats (0181-953 3026).

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Why Formula One is now just the pits

One of the mysteries of the rumpus over David Coulthard's "after you Mika" gesture to allow Hakkinen to win the Australian grand prix is the fact that there has been a rumpus at all. I enjoy Formula One racing, though not as much as I used to, but anyone who still thinks that F1 is a "race" in the normal sense of the word is one jet short of a carburettor.

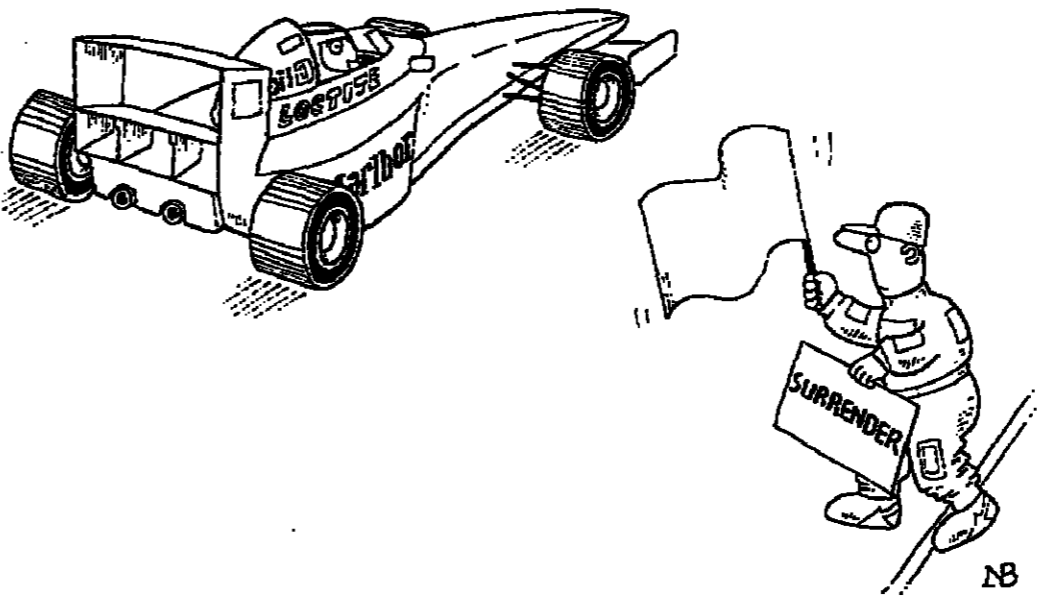
DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION



Peter Barnard

Stirling Moss was on Channel 4 last weekend talking about the year when both he and Fangio raced for Mercedes. Of course Moss and Fangio were proper sportsmen, not overpaid brats with egos the size of Mongolia.

off-track guile. Moss recalled a race, it may have been the 1955 British Grand Prix, for which both cars were initially set up the same, only for Moss to return to his mechanics later and ask for his car to have a different fourth gear. Moss won.



That was genuine competition, something that has almost vanished from the sport now. Moss is undoubtedly right that something needs to be done about the cars, which, for one thing, are far too safe, and which (a related problem) have far too much downforce.

Twenty years ago it would have been hard to believe that F1 could contrive to make watching 200mph cars boring, yet the sport has achieved it to the point where the only solution that the FIA, the governing body, could think of was to increase the number of times the cars are obliged to stand still.

Primera: the prime choice

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ROAD TEST
Alan Copps on the home-grown favourite that will be our company driver competition car

But the car offers more than reliability. Having just driven almost 1,000 miles in the 2-litre SRi version 1 was especially struck by the comfort. Comprehensive seat adjustment and a tilting steering wheel match the standard in this class of car, but the design of the seat offers much better lateral support than many of its rivals, a vital feature for any driver who wants to use the impressive performance.

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Strengthened body shell is one of a list of safety features that includes standard anti-lock brakes and driver's airbag

standard on all but the base model. It might have been a luxury once but it is regarded as an essential now for any driver who covers long distances, especially on motorways. The controls are simple and ready to hand and the system operates almost immediately even

on the coldest mornings when a clean screen and clear windows are as vital to safety as to comfort. Safety is enhanced through the Primera's anti-lock brakes, which are standard throughout the range, a stronger body shell, a driver's airbag as

standard and the option of passenger and side airbags. Security has been improved both for the car and for the new-look audio system.

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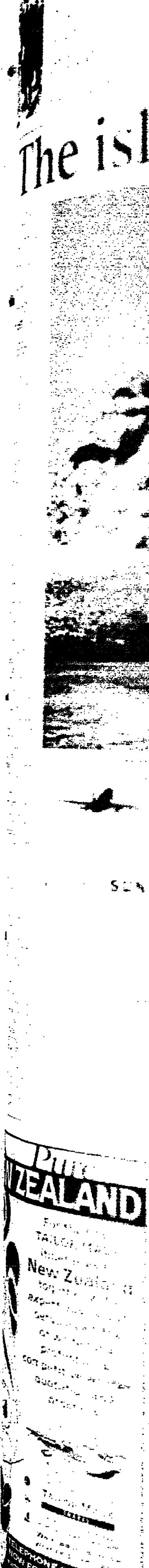
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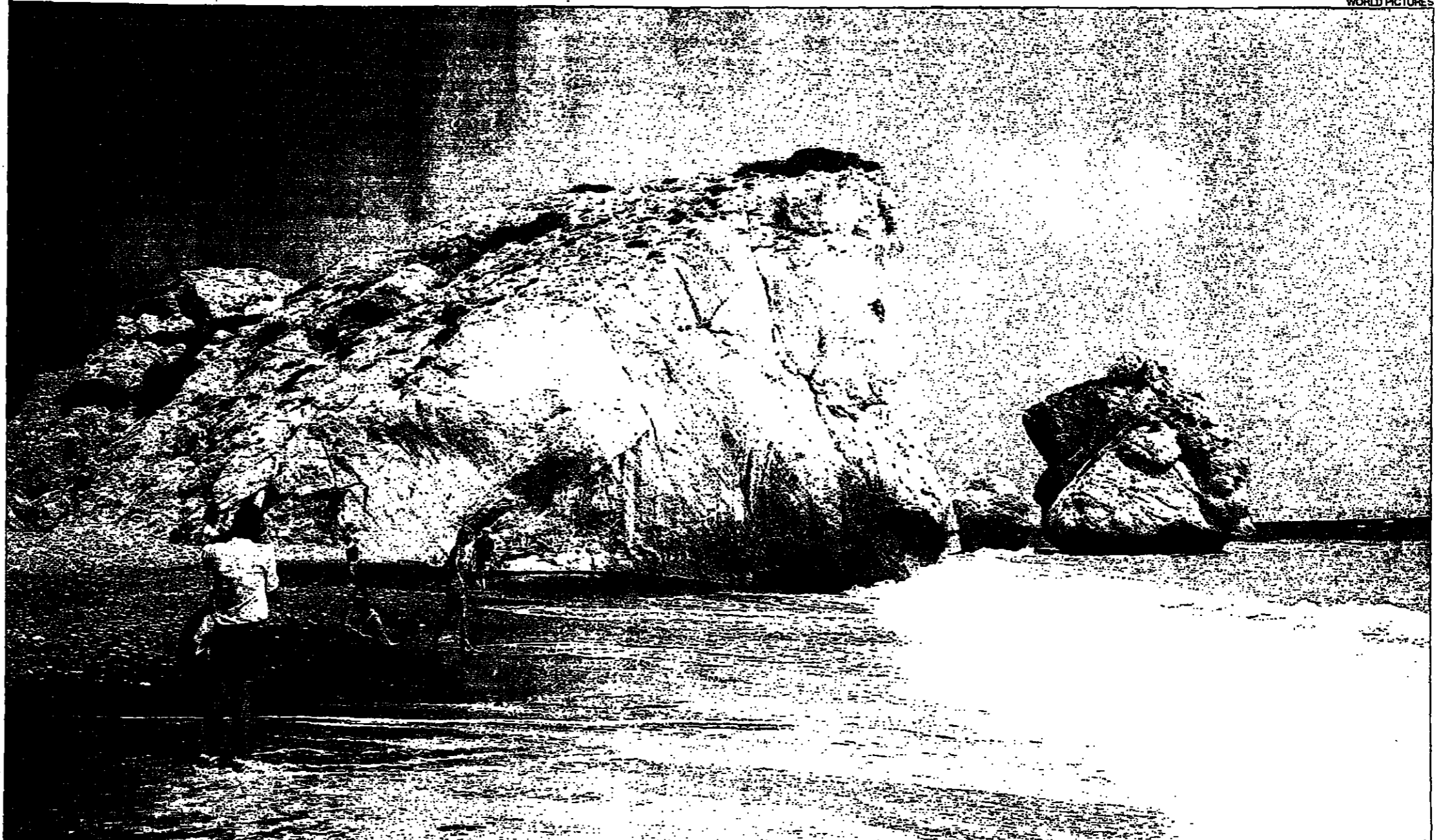
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The isle under Aphrodite's spell

Passions still run high on Cyprus, home of the ancient goddess of love, as Dea Birkett soon discovered



Love on the rocks: sight-seers enjoy the sea at the "birthplace" of Aphrodite, between Paphos and Pissouri in the west of Cyprus. But elsewhere, some hard-drinking Britons have given tourists a bad name

It's four in the morning, and Andy is very drunk. At the Horseshoe Pub, the barmaid is Glaswegian, the music is mid-Seventies, the décor is torn brown plastic and the beer is a pound a pint. The talk is of R&R and the latest Premiership results. The only clue that this is not some benighted corner of Britain is the brightness of the air: it's T-shirt temperature even in the small hours. We're on the outskirts of Larnaca, on a road known locally as The Strip, a few miles from Cyprus's biggest British military base. And all my drinking companions are British soldiers. It was towards the end of my week-long stay in Cyprus that I stumbled into the Horseshoe. I'd been admiring Roman ruins and Byzantine churches before delving into this less salubrious aspect of the island. From its snow-capped mountains to its sun-soaked seafront, Cyprus offered with its modest coastline everything a whole continent could, rather like an overgrown model village. There were the peaks of the Troodos, covering less than ten square miles; there were the beaches, short but sandy; the compact Akamas wilderness area where you needed a four-wheel drive and guide to get about; ancient excavations; and now the single seedy street of Larnaca where the Brits hang out.

"Other people pay £400 to be here for a fortnight. I'm a soldier, so I get paid to be here. It's like a two-year-long party," said Andy, slamming back a "Cyprus special" — ouzo, grenadine and a splash of lemonade over ice. Andy was right about the price: it's cheaper to travel to Cyprus now than it was ten years ago. But British visitors, who represent the bulk of Cyprus's tourist industry, no longer seem to be drawn to the island's scenery, historical sites and wilderness experiences. They head, instead, for the bottom-of-the-market bars and beaches.

"Once we got professional and retired people," says Lucy, a former holiday rep now married to a Cypriot. "I used to turn up for my welcome meeting with this huge historical map and give an hour-long talk about the antiquities of the island. But people just stopped listening. In the end I gave up. Now they just want to lie by the pool and drink." Last year was particularly disastrous for the island's



image. Cypriot fisherman Pavlos Georgiou was sentenced for knowingly infecting a British woman with Aids, after confessing to sleeping with up to 1,000 unsuspecting tourists. Among allegations of British Army cover-ups of violent incidents, a member of the King's Regiment was convicted of assaulting a British tourist in Ayia Napa, causing the battalion to be banned from the popular resort where a Danish tour guide had been murdered two years previously. Royal Marines paraded naked through the main square singing *God Save the Queen*; three members of the Royal Signals were fined for indecent

exposure in a swimming pool. It seemed that only the foolhardy would venture to the troubled isle. The Cypriot tourist industry is eager to counter this lagging image and attract more discerning clients who want to exercise their intellect rather than their libido, but so far with little apparent success. The manager of the Cactus Hotel in Larnaca used to have an almost exclusively British clientele. "Now it's mostly Russians," he says. "The British tour companies simply don't pay enough. The British have gone downmarket. They want everything cheap." So now he serves only a typical East European breakfast to his guests — hard-boiled eggs and Spam.

There are exceptions to this the-cheaper-the-better trend. The Laona Project, established by Friends of the Earth on the far western tip of the island, restores old village houses for use as visitor accommodation. Tourists are encouraged to become involved in day-to-day village life. So far only one British tour operator, Sunvil, is sending holidaymakers. A week's line-dancing in a four-star hotel for less than £400 is more popular.

But away from the mass tourism there is still an unspoilt, even untouched, side to Cyprus. The air is so clear that it hurts. With no industry and no industrial neighbours the only source of pollution is traffic exhaust fumes.

The Akamas peninsula, named after a mythological lover of Aphrodite, is the most desolate area of the island, accessible only by walking one of the nature trails or by four-wheel drive over the dirt tracks. Migrating cranes sweep over the eucalyptus trees and turtles' nests along Lara Beach. Yet efforts to preserve the area as a national park have so far failed.

The political will is lacking, and nearby villages object to the proposal. They see other people selling their land for huge amounts to build massive holiday complexes and wonder why they can't profit in the same way. All over the island there are promises of pounds. Signs along the roads advertise "Luxury villas with pools for sale", pointing to vacant building plots, half-built abandoned sites or simply fields. The developers live in hope. As, indeed, do some of the British soldiers.

I leaned across the bar, sticky with beer, and asked Laura the barmaid what brought her to Cyprus. "I had a dead-end job in Glasgow. I thought it would be better to have a dead-end job in the sun," she said.

CYPRUS FACT FILE



Mine's a double: barmaid Laura and Dea Birkett

Dea Birkett travelled with Sunvil (0181-568 4499) which offers two-week village house holidays from £422, including car hire, flying from Luton or Gatwick.

The best guidebook to Cyprus is *Cyprus: The Rough Guide* (£9.99). Cadogan also publishes a *Cyprus guide in its Island Guides series* (£10.99). The Cyprus Tourist Office (premium rate 50p/min information line 0991 887744), has a good selection of literature. *The Guide to the Paphos Mosaics*, on sale at the Paphos Mosaics' kiosk, is excellent.

There are good restaurants that serve mezze for about £5 a head all over the island. Particularly recommended is the Peyia Tavern in Peyia, outside Paphos, and the Periyali fish taverna in Polis.

Andy thrust out his hips towards Laura in time to the Spice Girls. He was relieved to be posted to Cyprus after working 15-hour days in Northern Ireland. "Now I work two to three hours a day," he said. "I get off, I watch TV, I lie on the beach, I go swimming..." And in the evenings he comes to the Horseshoe. "In Northern Ireland it rained and we were issued with



he do something more useful with his time, like a GCSE correspondence course? And why did he drink so much?

"What do you think I'm drinking for? To get drunk, of course," he bellowed, grabbing my breast for a second time.

I shouldn't have been so astonished at Andy's advances. Sex is everywhere in Cyprus, and always has been. Aphrodite (or Venus) is the island's ancient patron goddess, and as part of her cult, sacred prostitutes were once obliged to give themselves to strangers in the temple precincts.

At the sanctuary of Aphrodite on the edge of Kouklia village, an extraordinarily beautiful mosaic shows Leda's bare bottom with a swan's beak suggestively pointing towards it. From the erotic Roman mosaics of the third century to the present-day island of love, Cyprus has continued to flirt and flaunt herself.

All over the island there are exquisite memories of long-gone lust. The Paphos Mosaics, which spread over several acres, depict lovers in every possible position and emotional state — courted, spurned, entwined, tormented.

Walking from one perfectly preserved floor to another is an emotional rollercoaster ride as the carpet of pictures tells a stream of moral tales that could have happened yesterday: Ikarios suffering at the hands of men he had plied with too much drink; the secret tryst of Pyramus and Thisbe, forerunners of Romeo and Juliet; Echo starving herself anorexic-style after Narcissus rejects her, until nothing is left but her voice.

Today, village youths, known as *kamaki*, spin around on motorbikes. They come out from hibernation and go fishing for tourists, says Lucy. "They go round and round a circuit looking for single women to pick up."

But in many ways Cyprus is extremely safe; the door of my rented apartment and hired car were left unlocked, and in the villages burglaries are virtually unknown. Even at the sanctuary of Aphrodite there was no unwarranted attention from *kamaki* or souvenir sellers.

I asked four visitors from Finchley, staring wistfully down at the mosaic of lovely Leda, how they were enjoying the island of love. "The towns are full of jobs," said one. "It's the foreigners, the Brits. You just have to get out to the villages to avoid them. When you're among Cypriots, it couldn't be better."

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Fishy business at the shark rodeo

Nicholas Wapshott learns to admire the high-tech design of this fearsome predator of the high seas

Sharks kill people, don't they? They grab small children in their jaws and drag them under the water in a swirl of blood. They chomp the arms of grown men with their razor-sharp teeth and snatch bathers from the beach and leave them limbless and lifeless on the sand.

There is no more dangerous predator under the sea than the shark. They have very small brains and die if they do not move relentlessly forward, devouring everything in their path. They are prehistoric animals who have spent thousands of years perfecting their position at the top of the maritime food chain.

Well, up to a point, Jacques Cousteau. Sharks are without rival among fishes and amphibious animals. Except, that is, for man. A man with a harpoon can take out a shark all right. But what of an unarmed man clad only in a wetsuit and breathing equipment? How soon before the shark sinks its teeth into the rubber and likes what it tastes? How quickly before the diver is screaming, gasping, drowning?

The invitation came from *Dive* magazine, which organises the annual Dive Show at Earls Court in two weeks' time. Would I like to go diving with sharks? I had seen diving with sharks on television once, where a diver was suspended in an iron cage as the sharks hovered around, every now and then crashing their teeth into the bars to get at the human bait, like Sylvester trying to prize Tweety-Pie from his birdcage. It sounded exciting. And dangerous. So I said yes.

As it turned out, it was not the sharks which put my life in danger, but the humans I was diving with.

We flew by flying boat, via Florida, to Walker's Cay, a tiny spit of an island in the Bahamas, 100 acres in all. The shark jokes began as soon as we stepped ashore. Journalists and sharks: how can you tell the difference? What would you like for your final breakfast? What should we do with the return ticket?

I was asked to sign a waiver agreement, which vamped up the danger. Surely this, too, was showbiz. Could lawyers really use phrases like these? "I understand that I am requesting to participate in a scuba dive that is intended to be done in the presence of wild and unpredictable sharks. I



Design classic: a Caribbean reef shark displays its streamlined shape and torpedo-like nose. Contrary to popular belief, it is extremely rare for a shark to attack a human



Smile, please: a Caribbean reef shark poses for a group of divers-turned-photographers

understand that Walker's Cay will intentionally attract these sharks to the immediate area of this dive and that I will be swimming unprotected within ten feet or less of these sharks...

We were given a rigorous briefing by Gary Adkison, the dive leader and master of ceremonies for what he calls a

"shark rodeo", and after a couple of warm-up dives there we were in the dive boat, revving up the engines like Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* to attract the sharks. Soon the water was crowded with pale grey shark-shaped shadows. And soon after that I was making a big step off the boat, without even a dive knife

for protection, and slowly sinking towards the bottom.

It is difficult to be certain how many sharks had made it to their daily rendezvous, they were moving around so fast. Thirty, forty, fifty, maybe more? They had come to eat a huge lump of frozen fish, suspended on a line from the boat. A feeding frenzy was taking place and as long as we kept away from the "hot area", we were told, we would be safe. Sharks were crashing at the frozen dinner, plunging in their teeth and ramming their heads from side to side to wrest the flesh apart. Smaller fish looked on, waiting for the scraps, seemingly oblivious of the danger the sharks posed.

Behind us, sharks sauntered around at a more leisurely pace and it was possible to see what extraordinary creatures they are. These were Caribbean reef sharks, in the main, and they are design classics. Tucked beneath the torpedo of a nose is the grim line of the mouth and inside are rows of teeth which, when the beast

yawns, are seen to be arrayed in two quite separate jaws. The eyes give off a dead gaze, assessing what is edible; every now and then they go unnervingly white as they blink laterally.

Lying in three vertical stripes on each side are the gills, like the radiator of a sports car. The fins are perfectly sculpted in pairs, with two swivelling fins on top which cause the shark to nod from side to side as it swims. And what perfect fins they are. Harley Earl, the genius designer of the 1948 Cadillac that set in train the fashion for fin-tailed American cars in the 1950s, sneaked a look at a fighter plane, a Lockheed P-38, for inspiration. And the designer of the P-38 must surely have looked closely at a shark.

It was all too interesting to be frightening. They looked deadly, but there was nothing in their behaviour to suggest that they could suddenly turn nasty. A dog in the street was more likely to nip you. Back on dry land it was reluctantly confirmed by our hosts that it was extremely rare for a shark to attack a human in any circumstances. Except small children wading in shallow

water. Or a swimmer on the surface who might look like a seal. Or a diver who came too close to a piece of jettisoned fish during a shark rodeo.

A few days later I flew to Nassau, capital of the Bahamas, for a different kind of shark dive. The gallows humour from the dive crew was the same, if by now growing a bit thin, but the shape of the shark encounter was quite different.

Three divers were kited out in chain mail, like medieval knights, and stood in front of us, feeding sharks dead fish from a skewer. We were kneeling in a line, shoulder to shoulder for safety, and the frenzy went on a yard away.

After Walker's Cay, the Nas-

PLANET EARTH



Nicholas Wapshott, who found some diving companions can be less reliable than others

sau shark show seemed tame, more contrived, more intrusive of the natural order. One of the ringmasters enjoyed teasing the sharks by hiding pieces of fish and then man-handled them so their tails thwacked against us for added thrill. This was altogether more of a circus.

While I felt quite safe during the shark show, I was not so happy the previous afternoon on a dive to visit two wrecks used in James Bond movies. There were eight of us paired off, as is the safe way, with "buddies".

Soon after we entered the water, my buddy and I discovered we had too few weights and returned to the boat for more. By the time we submerged for a second time, the dive leader, his safety assistant and the others in the party had

set off without us and were out of sight. We headed off for five minutes or so in the general direction of the wrecks, but soon realised it was hopeless, so we signalled to each other to make for the surface.

There was a large swell and a strong current which meant it was difficult to talk and before long we were too far apart even to shout. Our dive boat was some distance away and, with the current pushing so strongly against us, it was clear it was too far to reach. We inflated our jackets and kept our breathing equipment in our mouths.

Even so, as the waves broke over us, I soon took in mouthfuls of salt water, and began feeling sick. It is at moments like this

that panic creeps in. The effort of even staying in one place was tiring, yet to stop kicking was to drift further away. By now unable to see or hear my buddy, I gave a signal of despair, one hand on top of my head, which the lone lookout on our boat failed to spot. It was a dark moment.

Then I heard a voice. At some distance, but ahead of us and with the current, was another dive boat which helped us to safety.

When we were finally reunited with our own boat, the others were surfacing. "You came up on the wrong boat," our dive master chided. "But I saw you on the wreck, right?"

"No," I said. "You left without us and we abandoned the dive." When it comes to diving with sharks, you can't choose your humans too carefully.

FACT FILE

- Dive show: The London International Dive Show is at Olympia on March 28-29. Admission £7.50, but £5 with a copy of this article. Details: 0181-943 4288.
- Nicholas Wapshott stayed at Walker's Cay Hotel & Marina in Abaco and at the Orange Hill Club in Nassau.
- Accommodation: Walker's Cay Hotel & Marina (001 954 359 1400) has a week's half-board from £947, based on two sharing, including accommodation and three dives a day. One shark dive is included. Orange Hill Club (042 327 787) has a week's B&B from £493 per person, based on two sharing. This price includes two tank dives every day for six days at the Nassau Scuba Centre (042 362 1964).
- Getting there: British Airways (0345 22211) has direct flights to Nassau from Heathrow from £576. Flights to Fort Lauderdale from Gatwick or Heathrow are from £422. Continental Airways (0800 776464) has flights from Gatwick from £490.40. Harlequin Worldwide (01708 852780) has a week's room-only in April at the Nassau Beach Hotel for £938, based on two sharing. This includes five days' diving. Shark diving is also available.
- Further information: The Bahamas Tourist Office (01463 449907) can give advice on accommodation, flights and diving operators.

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Ghost, February 1998.

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All hope was lost once the front end of the Titanic dipped beneath the waves. More than 1,000 perished

Gareth Huw Davies visits Nova Scotia, site of the final resting place for forgotten victims of the Titanic disaster



Barren trees and an eerie silence pervade the snowy wastes at Fairview Cemetery in Halifax. The cemetery manager adorns the grave of an unknown child with flowers

Snowdrifts of silent grief

Three ranks of neat black granite headstones protrude to knee height through the snow. Each stone is etched with the same date, April 15, 1912. The only sound in this hillside cemetery in Halifax, Nova Scotia, is the growl of a diesel loco in the nearby rail freight yard, but I sense I am in the company of millions, the vast audience of cinegoers around the world who are grieving for the fictional incarnations of the real people buried around me.

The bodies of 1,100 victims of the Titanic were never recovered. But for those that were, this friendly Canadian port, 700 miles west of the point where the "unsinkable" White Star liner sank, is their resting place — 150 people, mainly third-class passengers and crew, were interred in three cemeteries in the city.

Three Halifax vessels, the Mackay-Bennett, Minia and Montmagny, were despatched by the White Star company and picked up 327 bodies. The lack of refrigeration equipment on these ships, and the delay in finding many corpses meant that they were so decomposed they had to be buried at sea. The remaining 209 were landed at Quay 1 and met by embalmers from all over Canada's maritime provinces. First-class passengers, such as Jacob Astor, were taken away by their families for interment but most of the third-class passengers and crew, alone and unknown, were buried in the Fairview Cemetery. The cemetery is about two miles out of the centre of this



Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio, who play the main characters in the Oscar-nominated movie Titanic

hilly, leafy, cheerful city, on land that slopes gently down to the world's biggest natural harbour after Sydney's. A single flower has been placed on the headstone of each of the Titanic victims.

I read the roll call of names so spectacularly raised from obscurity: Luigi Gatti, Simon Sather, Malcolm Johnson, M. de Zacarian. Even now some graves are identified only by a number.

The grave of 29-year-old Alma Palsion and her four children, aged two to eight, rather demolishes the "women and children first" myth — in the event, a greater proportion of first-class men survived the

sinking than third-class children. The cemetery manager reserves his special devotion for the stone of "an unknown child", which he keeps constantly adorned with a wreath.

My guide, David Fleming, a retired custodian of the Maritime Museum, has shown many people around, including Walter Lord, author of A Night to Remember. His most moving story concerns a

visit to the Jewish cemetery, just a few yards up the slope, by Michel Navratil. He had come to see the grave of a certain Mr Hoffman, buried with their mother.

The cemetery is a dignified, understated place; there is only a single, simple sign that reads "Titanic Victims". Mrs Palsion and her children can rest in peace; their graves and the others will be tended forever through a fund set up

Titanic. He managed to place his sons in a lifeboat, but perished himself. The sons were later reunited with their mother.

The centre-piece is the glass case with the surviving Titanic deckchair. It served as someone's life raft, was picked up by the Minia and presented to the minister on board who conducted many of the



by White Star, and now administered by the city. On the way back to the centre of town, you pass the two high bridges over the narrows in the hour-glass-shaped bay and the Hydrostone, a model estate built to rehouse those who lost their homes in the city's own disaster. In 1917 a ship, loaded with munitions for the First World War battlefields, blew up and killed 2,000. It was the biggest man-made explosion before Hiroshima.

On the waterfront — close to Pier 21, where a million and a half European immigrants first set foot in North America — the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic houses the world's biggest Titanic exhibition. It is a well-presented collection of displays, photographs and artefacts from the ship, recalling transient luxury, technological calamity and folie de grandeur.

The centrepiece is the glass case with the surviving Titanic deckchair. It served as someone's life raft, was picked up by the Minia and presented to the minister on board who conducted many of the



The Titanic's surviving deckchair on show in Halifax

Along with being a box-office blockbuster, the film Titanic has earned a record-equalling 14 Oscar nominations, including Kate Winslet for Best Actress and several in the technical categories. The Academy Awards ceremony will take place on March 23. Other current Titanic sites/exhibitions include: Titanic The Exhibition, in St Petersburg in Florida (901 813 822 3693). Admission: adults £8.70; students/school children £3.70; children under six free. The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum (01232 428428) in Culture in Co. Down has an exhibition covering the construction of the Titanic in Ulster docks. Adult entry £3; children under 16, £2. And Belfast City Bus Tours (01232 458494) has sightseeing trips that go to the docks. Adults £7.50; children under 16, £5.

Gareth Huw Davies travelled with Nova Scotia Tourism and Canadian Pacific Hotels. He stayed at Hotel Halifax, 1990 Barrington St (UK reservations 0800 303030).

Air Canada (990 247226) flies directly from Heathrow to Halifax, and Canada 3000 begins direct Garwick-Halifax flights on April 30, starting at £199 return and bookable through Bluebird Holidays (0990 320000), flight only.

Titanic: The Unsinkable Ship and Halifax, a new permanent exhibition, is at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Lower Water St, Halifax (001 902 434 7490), open all year round.

Further information from Visit Canada Centre, 62-65 Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DT (0891 715000; premium-rate line at 50p/min).

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Haunting beauty of a tragic land

© MARK WADLOW

Adrian Mourby found the Solovetsky Islands, where Stalin based one of his gulag prisons, strangely inspiring

There are two ways to reach the Solovetsky Islands. Aeroflot can fly you in from Archangel but the most common route — and one that was used in all the years that Solovetsky served as one of the Soviet gulag prisons — is across the White Sea by boat.

You leave from Viena Kemi, the decaying wooden dockyard where, in the 1930s, victims of Stalin's purges awaited transportation in their thousands, and lurch across 30 windblown miles to the tranquil harbour of Prosperity Bay.

Coming face to face with the golden domes of Solovetsky can be a shock. Here on a flat, tree-strewn, sub-Arctic island, it looks as if an early draft of the Kremlin has been set down by giant hands on a cold, calm waterfront. Huge fortress walls, dating from the end of the 16th century, surround the whitewashed Cathedral of the Transfiguration which is older still. Such was the sight that greeted generations of pilgrims before Solovetsky, already a repository for dissident clerics, became a Romanoff civilian prison in the 18th century.

It is also how 40,000 prisoners of the Russian Revolution first glimpsed their new home in the years following May 1923. Solovetsky was the Bolsheviks' first experiment in geographical isolation for political prisoners. It proved so successful that the pattern was repeated throughout what Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in the title of his 1974 novel, was to term the "Gulag Archipelago". Solzhenitsyn quotes Volkov, a Solovetsky survivor, describing it as "a landmark in Russian torture".

Today, Solovetsky exudes a curious serenity, although the monastery itself is in poor repair. When the first monks returned to the island in 1990, the Russian Government promised 40 million roubles for restoration work, but so far only two million have been made available. As a result the tiny Church of the Annunciation is now open for incense-laden Orthodox services and the vast Transfiguration Cathedral is repaired but still completely empty.

When I caught up with a party of Moscow journalists being shown round the cathedral, Alexander Ananchenko, the sombre director of Solovetsky tourism, was explaining how the priceless icons were smashed or removed to "prepare" the cathedral for its new role.

"Here in the times of Stalin, the prisoners were brought first for maybe one or two days," he said. "In this one chamber as many as 3,000 men and women were kept waiting in bunks four beds high. Worst of all, the altar was used as a latrine." Now the empty space where the

altar once stood is curtained off. Solovetsky may not have the money to rebuild but it does have respect for its shrines.

A museum has been opened to one side of the Annunciation Church which displays the history of SLOAN (the Solovetsky Special Purpose Camp became known). Here you can see photographs of the intellectuals and artists who were its first inmates (in the gentler 1920s prisoners were running up to six theatres on Solovetsky and even producing their own newspaper). There is also a photograph of Comrade Kedrov, the Bolshevik leader who closed the monastery in 1920 but was himself exiled to Solovetsky during Stalin's savage Bolshevik purge of 1937. He was subsequently shot.

Some happier stories do exist. I saw a flower pinned to the photograph of D.I. Tshikov who was on Solovetsky from 1935 to 1937. His widow has visited the island recently and a note in her own handwriting confirmed that Comrade Tshikov died peacefully in 1988, aged 78.

After visiting the monastery I hitched a lift on the one bus that roams around what locals call "Big Solovetsky Island", by far the largest landmass in this White Sea archipelago. Our driver was a ruddy Tolstoyan-looking peasant by the name of Sasha. Although he was supposed to be taking us to the Church of the Ascension, he pulled up first at a small concrete store from which emerged that same cheerful group of Moscow journal-

Solovetsky today has great respect for its shrines

ists, now clutching bottles of vodka and cheap Russian champagne. A party was soon in full swing on the bus, although the roads were so bumpy that much of the alcohol splashed out of plastic beakers and all over the Muscovites' designer denim.

Travelling to the Church of the Ascension took about half an hour, although a two-hour walk would have been a much more comfortable experience. Dark pine forest lined the rutted route, which meant I had no idea we were gradually ascending until we reached the highest point of the island — its name translates as Hatchet Hill — and saw nothing but forest and lakes laid out below, and nothing but forest to the horizon.

The church which stands on the hill is a delicate mid-19th-century building, with a light-house beacon built into its cupola. From it the monks could see any ships approaching Solovetsky, something they had discovered to be desirable because between 1854 and 1855, in a curious footnote to the Crimean War, British frigates shelled the monastery. More curious still, a local story goes that when the Royal Navy concluded its peace with Solovetsky's Arch-



The cathedral at the monastery in Solovetsky: this was the sight that greeted generations of pilgrims before the islands became a Romanoff civilian prison in the 18th century

mandrite Alexander they requested that he sell them some oxen for their provisions and the Archimandrite defiantly refused.

During its gulag days, however, the Ascension Church witnessed much grimmer scenes. Because of its remoteness it became known as the "punishment isolator", from which few prisoners ever returned. Many were shot and pushed over the cliffs, others were tied alive to logs and

bounced down the long flight of steps for the guards' amusement.

In June 1929, Maxim Gorky, Lenin's favourite author, visited the island and asked to see the famous Church of the Ascension. Here the old man was deceived into believing that the church was being used as a sanatorium. In order to maintain the deception, prisoners were forbidden to speak to Gorky and each was given a magazine to read for the duration of his visit. So the inmates made their protest known by holding their newspapers and magazines upside down. Gorky, realising what was going on, left in tears. Standing

by a memorial cross that has recently been erected below Hatchet Hill, our guide explained that all those who had turned their papers upside down were killed as soon as the distinguished guest had departed.

In the 1950s the last gulag prisoners left and Solovetsky continued as a military and naval academy. The islanders recall that some of the worst damage to the fabric of the monastery was done during this time. After the events of 1990, Moscow withdrew the remaining soldiers and a modern wooden guest house now

stands next to the barracks. There is even a sauna on the lakeside for the benefit of visiting Finns who have made the 190-mile journey east from the border.

The six islands of the Solovetsky archipelago are facing a financial crisis because prayer and contemplation do not earn as much as the military base once did. There is some fishing and the 29 monks run a crèche to help families who need a joint income, but

tourism is an increasingly attractive option. Before 1990, only Soviet citizens could visit Solovetsky, but a big effort is being made to make the place more attractive to Westerners. Satellite television has arrived in the small restaurant opposite the guest house and if the roads could be improved, touring round the six islands might one day be a delight, providing you can forget those suffering built the roads and whose bodies lie in unmarked graves everywhere you tread.

In 1917 Gorky wrote, somewhat prophetically, "The Russian people will pay for Lenin's experiment with lakes of blood." Solovetsky rises from those lakes as an island of unexpected, and almost inappropriate, beauty.

Many were shot and pushed over the cliffs

Tourism behind bars

Solovetsky is not the only former prison to turn to tourism. Britain's most celebrated place of incarceration, the Tower of London (0171-709 0765), is today one of this country's most popular tourist attractions. The last resident was Rudolf Hess, who in 1941 spent four days living in the Queen's House, writes Adrian Mourby.

South Africa is opening the gates of its notorious Robben Island. There are plans to offer hotel accommodation on the island where Nelson Mandela spent much of his 26 years of imprisonment. Call Cape Town Tourism (00 2721 418 5202).

Another famous prison island that is now a tourist attraction is to be found in San Francisco Bay. In its time, Alcatraz housed Al Capone, Machine Gun Kelly and Robert Stroud, the birdman who wrote several books about the feathered creatures that he befriended. Today the Rock is part of the Golden Gate Recreation Area, its prison bars rusting away. The Red & White Fleet (001 415 447 0597) runs trips across the bay from Fisherman's Wharf, which are met by park rangers who will take visitors round or supply audio tours. Off the Australian coast, the



Alcatraz: the island prison in San Francisco Bay

Tasman Peninsula is now a favourite with visitors who may remember tales of Van Diemen's Land. Now known as The Port Arthur Historic Site (0061 362 502363), this former industrial prison offers walking tours, harbour cruises and night-time tours of the grim facility where British political prisoners and multiple offenders were housed. Look out for Smith

O'Brien's cottage, a memorial to deported Irish nationalists. Most of the Nazi prisons of the Second World War have been torn down or converted. At Buchenwald in Germany, for example, the prison has been razed although a museum still exists. There is also a museum at Dachau, near Munich. The Holocaust Educational Trust (0171-222 6822) can provide information.

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TRAVELLING TO SOLOVETSKY ISLAND

Getting there: Adrian Mourby travelled with British Airways (0345 22211) to Helsinki, and by Finnair to Kajaani on the Finnish-Russian border.

EA quotes £376.20 for a return through ticket to Kajaani, travelling in March. He then travelled overland to Viena Kemi (two days in a four-wheeled drive to cover 150 miles) and across the White Sea (two-three hours) to Solovetsky Island. This was organised by Kalnus Marketing (00 358 8 6120 600, fax 00 358 8 6120 603). The total cost of a visit is about £1,500-£2,000.

Alternatively, Aeroflot flies to Solovetsky via Archangel. Its agent, RMS Travel (0171-224 4678) quotes £530 return travel to Archangel in June or July — the onward leg to Solovetsky must be bought locally.



When to visit: The best months are between June and September, when the sea is not so rough — or frozen over. Days are also longer. The sea freezes after October. Visas: The Russian Federation Embassy (0891 7127), a premium rate number, 50p a minute) is at 5 Kensington Palace Gardens,

London W8 4QS. Tourist visas cost £10 and take 14 working days to process; cannot apply more than three months before travelling. The office is open to visitors between 10am-12.30pm on weekdays (except Wednesday). Three passport photographs needed.

Information: Bizarrely, a CD-Rom — "The Mystery of the Solovetsky Island" — is available in the monastery, which will operate on Windows 95 in English or Russian. Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* (Harville, £9.99) is good; his moving account of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (Harville, £7.99) is compulsory. *Russia by Rail* (Bradt, £13.95) has a small section on Solovetsky. *Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (Lonely Planet, £16.99, edited by John Noble,

Advertisement for a travel agency. It features a graphic with the text "Annual travel paper that starts at £40". Below this, it says "Don't just travel, put the best of the best in your holiday bag. Money, mystery, romance, history, and more. Call 01702 423393".

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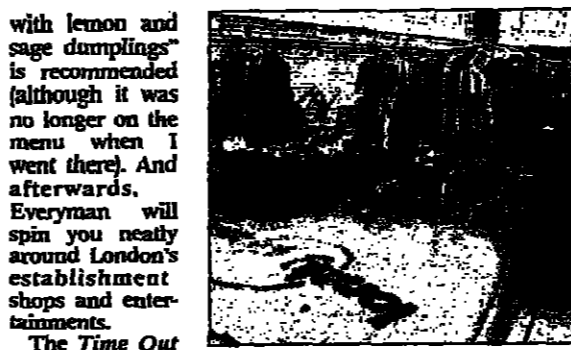
Guilty of a capital reference

Rachel Campbell-Johnston turns many pages to visit London through the ages



Tower Bridge: gateway to Rachel Campbell-Johnston's tour of the Tower of London

If there's a buzz, there's going to be a book about it. That's how a frisson turns into a fact. So with London now hyped as the Capital of Cool, it is no surprise to find the publishing industry hot on its heels with a slew of new London guides.



The Lonely Planet taxi snakes through Portobello Road market

many years no ravens bred at the Tower. In 1989 the first chick was successfully reared. A competition on the television programme Blue Peter to find a suitable name came up with... Ronald Raven.

Where pop's finest made their marks

Alex O'Connell fulfils a teenage fantasy, tracing the footsteps of the stars on a rockers' tour of London



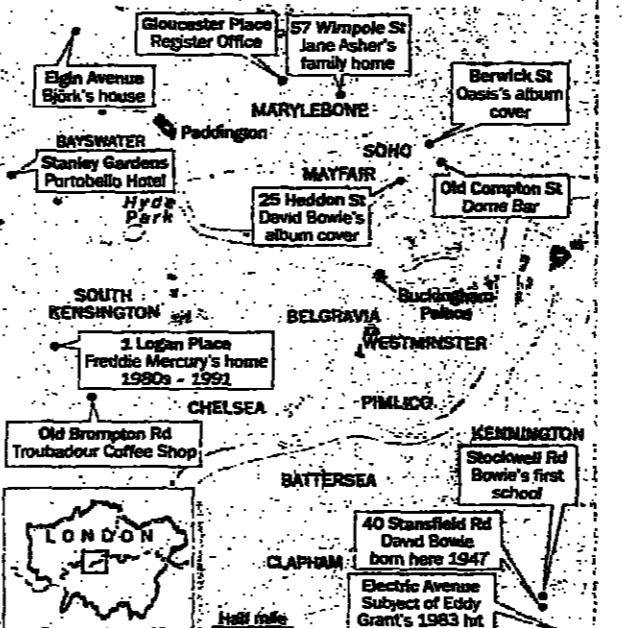
Being a fan is a shameful business. I never doostopped my heroes, but there were the Adam Ant rulers. Duran Duran pencil cases and Busy Lizzies named after the members of A-ha.

Smash Hits insisted was his "rave hangout" are no more. I am 24. I don't collect stickers and I don't subscribe to any fan clubs.



Freddie Mercury continues to attract a worldwide cult following seven years after his death, and fans pay homage by daubing graffiti outside his former home in Notting Hill

dragged my friend Feargus along. We kicked off in Brixton, southwest London. Just down the road from my flat we came to 40 Stansfield Road, the row of first-northern-gate-friendly Victorian terrace houses where Davy Jones (aka David Bowie) was born in 1947.



Back, and on April 17 last year actress Fanny Kanitz hooked Liam Gallagher. On we walked to 57 Wimpole Street, former home of Jane Asher and Paul McCartney.

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Shadowing was Davy's school route. We swung satchels around the corner into Stockwell Road and Bowie's first school, Stockwell Infants, the austere Victorian red-brick building where he started on November 12, 1951.

We hopped on a Tube. Thirty minutes later, we arrived at Earl's Court and walked down to the Troubadour coffee shop on the Old Brompton Road. I used to come here years ago, after school, but had no idea then that this dingy supper spot was where Bob Dylan played his first British gig.

Refreshed, we decided to do a bit of shopping in Berwick Street - pictured on the cover of Oasis's (What's the Story?) Morning Glory, the best selling album of 1995.

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Don't throw in the towel. THE ITALIAN I.

Don't throw in the trowel



The English embroiderers are looking a little alarmed. Their tour brochure for Kutch, about as far west as you can go in India, had mentioned three nights in a native village. "But there aren't going to be any toilets," reports one of the group, as crisp as her blouse. "They're giving us a trowel each to go and dig our own little holes." The others look aghast. You could hear a such drop.

The trowel-wielding embroiderers are here, in this former princely state in the north of Gujarat, to study textiles. Not many other tourists make the trip. The area is emphatically off the roundabout of "Hello, sir... Which country?... Taxi?... Change money?... Hashish?" True, there are a few backpacking post-hippies, slotting in three days in Kutch as they jingle-jangle their way from Kathmandu through Dharamsala, Jaipur and down to Goa. They dress with studious grubbiness and have no time for such effete niceties as trowels. But post-hippies and embroiderers apart, Kutch, out on a limb near the Pakistan border, is waiting to be discovered. It is worth the effort. Its villages, across curiously appealing scrubby desert, offer a chance to experience rural India; its people are unfailingly welcoming and it has much of the vivid colour, if not the rich romance, of neighbouring Rajasthan.

It is a connoisseur's corner of India, as the local tourist brochure makes abundantly plain. "For the tourists, Kutch offers every thing desirable," it says. "From sandy dry scene to mountain trek, from earthen-quake-hit and scarcity-ridden area to fertile block. This is an area with full natural calamities." As for the Ranns, the vast salt marshes that make Kutch an island for part of the year: "Strong [sic] winds, tempestuous sands, scattered salt on all sides, terribly effected main Rann with loneliness, small Rann filled with mud and mire. With all those difficulties, people are not despaired, instead they face those calamities with buoyant faces. They

The former princely state of Kutch and its villages reveal the magic and charm of rural India, says Stephen McClarence



Stitching away at tradition: a woman works at her embroidery outside the huts of a Kutch craft village; tiny fragments of mirror are often used to decorate the work

FACT FILE
■ Getting there: Stephen McClarence bought his own airline ticket to Delhi, flying with Air India from Manchester, booked through Trailfinders (0171-938 3366). Current fares: Manchester-India £446; London-India £512. United Airlines (0845 844777) has direct flights from Heathrow to Delhi from £858 before June 1, with a minimum stay of 14 days. After June 1 flights are from £899.
■ Internal travel: Bhuj is best reached from Bombay. Indian Airlines flies four times weekly (£122 return). From Delhi, the fare is £312.
■ Alternatively, Indian Airlines offers a 15-day airpass in India for £305, 20 days, £460. Jet Airways (0181-970 1525) also has a 15-day pass for £335, 21 days £490. The train from Bombay takes about 17



Decorated house — and two young inhabitants — in Kutch

hours and costs £30 return (second-class, air-conditioned sleeper, no first class).
■ Accommodation: The Hotel Prince (00 91 2832 20370) has double rooms starting at £10 a night, rising to £23 for a deluxe suite, including tax. Meals extra.

■ Bhuj hotels organise taxi tours of Kutch villages (about £14 a day), but permits are needed to visit some.
■ Red tape: British passport holders need a visa for India from the Indian High Commission (0171-836 8484). A six-month visa costs £19.
■ Reading: *India - Gujarat: Memoirs of a Bengali Civilian* by John Beames (Eland, £8.99). *A History of India, Vol 1* by Romila Thapar (Penguin, £7.99) and *Vol 2* by Percival Spear (Penguin, £5.99). *Gujarat and Daman by Philip Ward* (Oleander, £11.95). *India Rough Guide*, £14.99. *India* (Lonely Planet, £15.99).
■ Further information: Government of India Tourist Office, 7 Cork Street, London W1X 1BP (0171 437 3677) has brochures covering tourist sights in Gujarat and can provide information about accommodation, flights and tour operators specialising in the region.

gaze at the ceiling medallions of Shakespeare and Mozart and let out a collective silent roar. The front half of a lion bounds through a wall.
Bhuj is well placed for exploring the craft villages of Kutch, with their embroidery, carpets, block-printing and leatherwork. This is India at its most magical. Our taxi heads out of town through dark avenues of banyan trees, past fields of wheat and sugar cane into a landscape of cactus and skeletal trees, bullock carts and camels. A herd of cream goats with brown heads is tended by a man with cream robes and a brown turban.
We bounce down dusty tracks to the village of Nakhtarana, where the women flock to us. They wear brightly embroidered bodices, intricate heavy jewellery and gold earrings that distend their lobes like rubber bands.

Rani Benru, a woman with piercing pale blue eyes, is carrying her neighbour's daughter — two years old, she says, but already engaged to a five-year-old boy. Her home is a two-room hut full of cooking pots, family photographs and a 1960s television set showing *Baywatch* dubbed into Hindi. The women scatter their embroidery, decorated with tiny fragments of mirror. Many are employed by SEWA (the Self-Employed Women's Association), which aims to keep up craft standards and adapt traditional designs to the modern market. The result

is slightly bizarre: women in huts made of mud and dung turning out cases for sunglasses and covers for personal organisers — and buying factory-made clothes for themselves.
On the way to the next village, Mona Dave from SEWA describes the range of visitors. "We get professors from Europe here," she says. "They have a subject called poverty and they follow the village people about all day and write down what they do."
In the village, a big man in a big anorak looms round a hut. "You are looking at rural life?" he asks. "Come and have a drink." This is a tricky invitation, as Gujarat has strict prohibition laws. We sit down in a hut, where another man is dozing on a charpoy, and a goblet of whisky is passed round. It tastes like Essence of Car Battery. "Gujarat is a dry state," I say. "What if a policeman comes?"
"Do not worry," says the big man, taking off his anorak and revealing a familiar khaki uniform. "I am a policeman. Bottoms up!"
Back in Bhuj, the English embroiderers have survived their ethnic adventure. How was it? "Fine, actually," says the woman in the (slightly less) crisp blouse. "At least until one of the village women gave birth at 3am and they slaughtered a goat. There was this blood-curdling scream..." It put the trowels in perspective.

have not yet cultivated the sense of abscondence."
So, wearing our best buoyant faces, we stroll through Bhuj, the main town on Kutch, at sunset. It has an unselfconscious charm. Men are being shaved by the roadside. Women are stripping down twigs from neem trees to sell as toothbrushes. Boys are making cricket bats. Wild pigs snuffle and a wedding truck, with four life-size silver horses on the front, is being wheeled to a temple.
The vast "tank" or lake that dominates the town is almost dry, its cracked mud floor scattered with broken clay pots and shrivelled marigold garlands. Palm trees fringe it, cattle lope across it and, at the far side, a solitary old woman crouches by a small pool of

water wringing out her washing. Birds cluster — herons, spoonbills, nonchalant flamingos (the world's largest breeding colony is in Kutch).
Lots of places are called Helly — Helly Fast Foods, Helly Dining Hall, Helly Travels. What does it mean, Helly Travels, I ask a man who nearly runs me over on his motorbike. "It means that if you want to go to another place, they will arrange it for you," he says. "You are coming from which country? England? Ah, Imran Khan." Up past carved elephants and through huge creaking gates, the old town closes in. Its mazes of winding lanes are packed with open-fronted shops where tiny boys are carving bangles, where tailors whirl ancient Singer sewing machines and musicians stretch skins tight over drums. Kutch's famous metalwork is stacked high. I picked up an exquisitely decorated brass peacock doubling as a nut-cracker? "No sir, heroin cutters."
Most of Bhuj's town walls have been demolished; its

bazars, with their fax booths and "exclusive bathroom fittings" shops, are no more charming than those of any other busy Indian town; many streets are choked by traffic.
There are still the palaces, however — towering buildings covered in filigree screens, domes, private windows, secret balconies, ornament piled on ornament, real Scheherazade-style harems. Inside the old Maharao's Palace, up a quiet staircase, is a surprise. It is not a swish palace with mile after mile of polished marble, dusty way — mind the step and watch your head on the door — it gives a strong sense of the privileged seclusion enjoyed by Kutch's unbroken line of 178 maharajas (last died in Nov 165 to 177 available).
The twilight dimness of the place helps — particularly when the lights go out and attendants shine torches into the gloom to check you are not sloping off with half a ton of elephant mask.
The palace is full of eccentric delights: portraits of most of George III's children; musical boxes playing choice selections from the best French operas to

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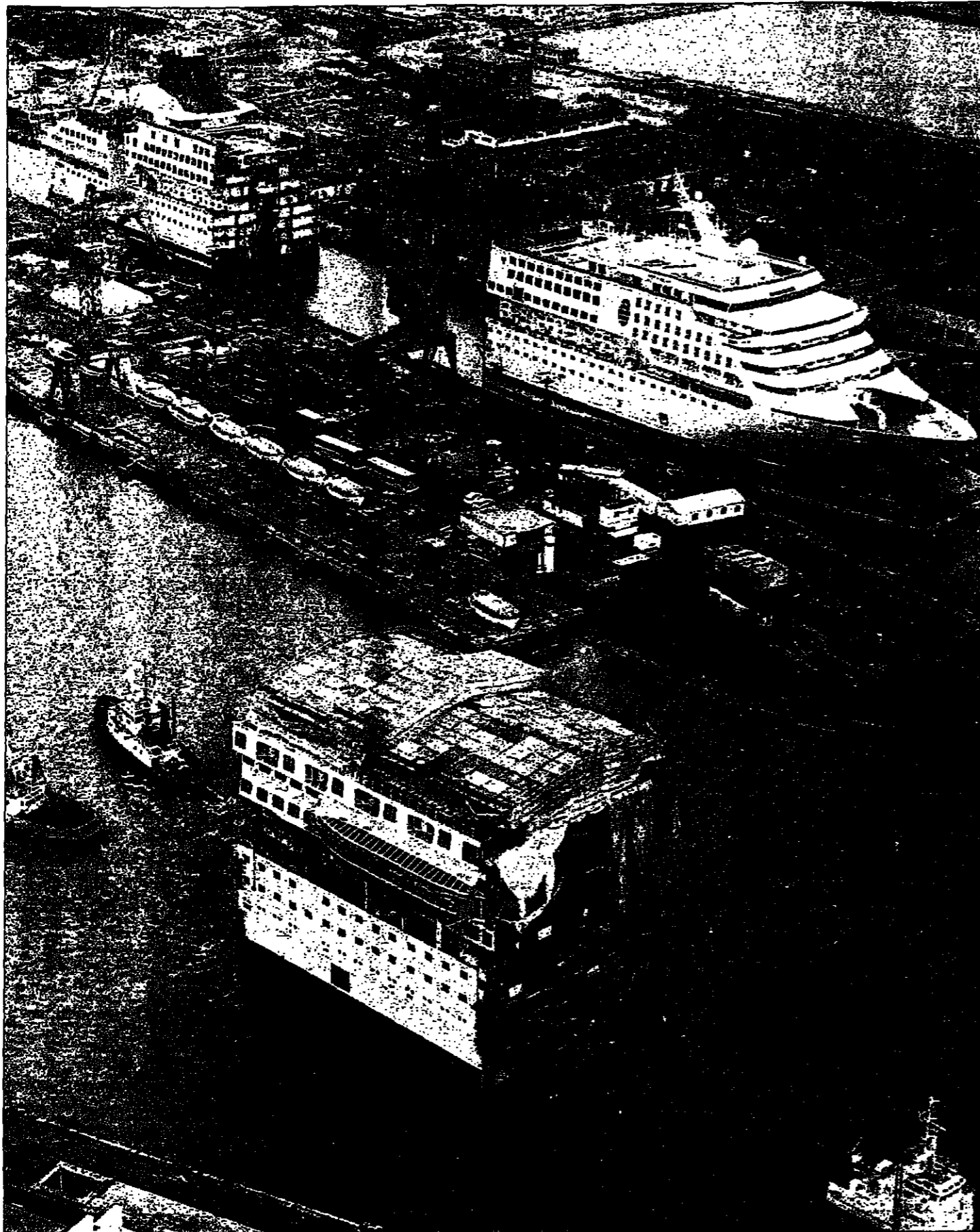
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When splitting up is hard to do



After being cut in half, the front section of the M/S Windward is towed out of the dry dock so the middle section can be put in place

Simon Veness does some messing about in the boatyard

Norwegian Cruise Line has come up with an ingenious way of increasing passenger numbers without buying a new ship: it is slicing two of its ships in half and welding in new mid-sections to add 500 extra berths to each.

While the aft section remained anchored in the flooded dry dock, the bow half, attached to a pontoon, was moved out to allow the new heart of the ship to be roughly positioned. The front portion was then aligned using lasers.

Work began on the ride in November 1996, and its total cost is around £12 million. It is estimated that 1,900 people will ride it every hour — a total of 3.5 million altogether this year. Those who do not feel brave enough can watch participants, who must be at least 1.4m tall, screaming on giant video screens near the entrance.

Tom Chesshyre on a lesson in fear management at Alton Towers



The Oblivion — “the rollercoaster addict’s holy grail”

The vertical challenge

THE world's first rollercoaster to take riders down a vertical drop opens at Alton Towers today.

Look before you book

CO-OP Travelcare, Britain's fifth largest travel agency, has become the first to let customers read *Gazetteer*, a detailed trade guide to holiday resorts.

The pop path leads to Sheffield

LONDON is not the only British city to promote its rock 'n' roll roots (see page 32). Now Sheffield hopes to attract musically inclined tourists.

FLYING VISITS table with columns for From, To, and Fares. Includes routes like London to Amsterdam, London to Athens, etc.

Airline telephone numbers: Air Astria 0800 4588111, British Airways (BA) 0345 222111, CityJet 0345 445588, easyJet 0990 292929, Transavia 01293 596850.

PACK YOUR BAGS logo and text.

MOTHERS Day is next Sunday, so why not treat her to a luxurious four-day spa break at the Grand Hotel Abano Terme, south of Venice in Italy?

Escape the March weather for a 14-night, fully inclusive break to the Dominican Republic for £469 per person, leaving Manchester on March 30.

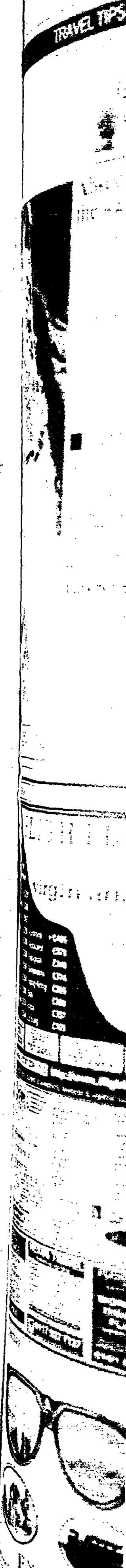
For a slightly different ski experience this spring, head for the Snowrider Eco-Sports Festival '98 in Chamonix, France from March 21-28.

The less energetic can opt for a Champagne Weekend with Arblaster & Clarke Wine Tours (01730 893344), visiting the Champagne region of France, departing London by luxury coach on March 28.

Plan your holiday to **AUSTRALIA** in the Sunday Times Australian Tourism Commission Supplement in tomorrows Sunday Times

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AROUND THE WORLD A WEEKEND GUIDE

TRAVEL TIPS by Jill Crawshaw
TRAVEL JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR



Abseil down the waterfall

LOADS OF action cushioned with comfortable accommodation is the recipe for the adventure holidays organised by Tall Stories (01932 252002) mainly in Austria, France, Corsica and Spain, with some multi-activity weekends in Britain. Adrenalin-pumping challenges range from white-water rafting to paragliding.

A week in Corsica where you could try riding, diving, trekking, sea kayaking, sailing or canyoning (which is abseiling around waterfalls), based at the Hotel Arena Bianca near Propriano, costs £455-£485 including all food and wine but not flights. Some weeks are reserved for families with children of 12 years and over.

THE Scandal Tours, run by actors from the Gross National Product theatre company, will restart on Friday in Washington DC. "Every time a new scandal breaks, they add new sites to the tour," says a spokesman. For \$30 you can visit politically notorious sites accompanied by actors playing Jennifer Flowers, Paula Jones and Bill and Hillary Clinton. The tours run daily, details from hotels.

Turkey time

THE Greek islands, so alluring for young backpackers, are in danger of losing out to the much cheaper charms of mainland Turkey, according to youth and student specialist Campus Travel (0171-730 3402).

"Bookings for Turkey are going through the roof," says Phil Griffiths, marketing manager. "Students are finding Turkey offers much better value for money, especially now the price of flights is starting to even out. Turkey is now regarded an 'in' destination,

and is also benefiting from people not wanting to risk travelling to Egypt.

The student market is not interested in beach holidays; the general trend seems to be to want to use Istanbul as a gateway and then travel around Turkey."

Return flights with Campus cost £140 (plus £20 tax) to Athens, and £170 (plus £30 tax) to Istanbul. The fare may decrease further.

Saving time with Mickey



VIRGIN Holidays (01293 617181) has opened up special express check-in facilities in Orlando's Downtown

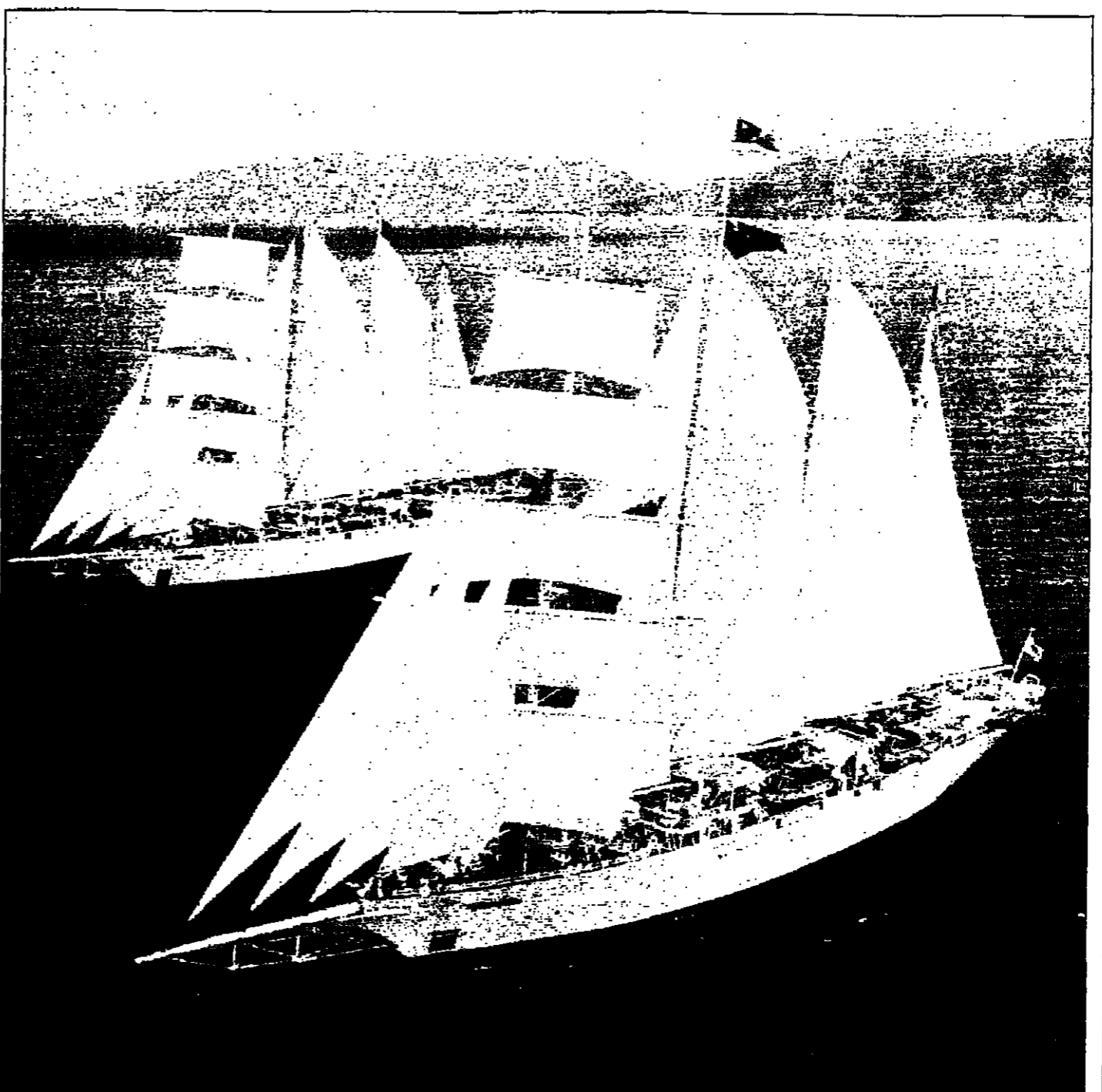
Disney Marketplace, so you do not have to spend the last day of your holiday carrying luggage. Donald Ducks and Mickey Mice around town before the evening flight home.

Check-in is from 9am to 1pm, seven days a week, saving much of the tedious three-hour wait at the airport and leaving plenty of time to shop for even more hand luggage to take home.

Back to Beirut

OLD Beirut hands said the reopening of the Casino du Liban and Beirut's National Museum would be a sign that the city was on the way to reclaiming its status as the Paris of the Middle East.

Happily, though much of the city centre is still under reconstruction, both are now back in business; the casino from early last year, and now the National Museum. The latter bore the brunt of many shellings due to its location between East and West Beirut on the so-called Green Line. Among its treasures is the 13th-century BC tomb of King Ahiram, inscribed with what is believed to be the first



Sails of the century: these two Swedish-owned clippers will next year be joined by a third, the largest in the world

example of the Roman alphabet. The tomb was discovered at Byblos, north of Beirut. This is the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in the world, and is still a delightful Mediterranean fishing port and resort. The museum is open Wednesday to Sunday, admission £2.

Sunvil Holidays (0181-568 4499) offers three-night B&B breaks to Beirut for £450. For an extra £109 you can have two days' sightseeing in a private taxi with a guide, including a visit to Byblos.

AT 439ft and 5,000 tons, she will be the queen of all clippers, with five masts, 40 sails and three outdoor pools, and she will be certified to cross all oceans. Swedish-owned Star

Clippers (01473 292229) already operates two 360ft clippers, with room for 170 passengers, on seven and 14-day cruises in the Caribbean, Far East and Mediterranean, and four transatlantic crossings. (A week's Mediterranean cruise costs from £730 to £1,220.) The 224-passenger and as-yet unnamed clipper, under construction in

Gdańsk, in Poland, will come into service next year. It will then overtake the current largest, the four-masted 414ft Russian sailing training barque the *Sedov*, built in 1920s Germany.

Travel articles in The Times since the beginning of the year are available on our Internet site. See "most recent" links on <http://www.the-times.co.uk>

CHECK-IN

FLIGHTBOOKERS travelling freestyle. virgin atlantic OFFERS New York fr £183, Boston £183, Los Angeles £243, San Francisco £243. Valid for travel 12 March - 2 April '98 and 12 April - 31 May '98. Must book and pay by 17 March '98.

Franco says "Spring cleaning? No! Spring into action. Book by 7 April for this amazing offer!" (Travel valid until 7 June.)

PETITS PRIX AIR FRANCE. LONDON - LYONS £145, LONDON - TOULOUSE £155, NEWCASTLE - PARIS £126, LONDON - BEIJING £305. Book by 20 March 1998. All return fares listed are subject to availability and differing travel periods and include all prepayable taxes correct at time of going to press.

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